Honoré de Balzac

LA COMÉDIE HUMAINE

Memorial Edition

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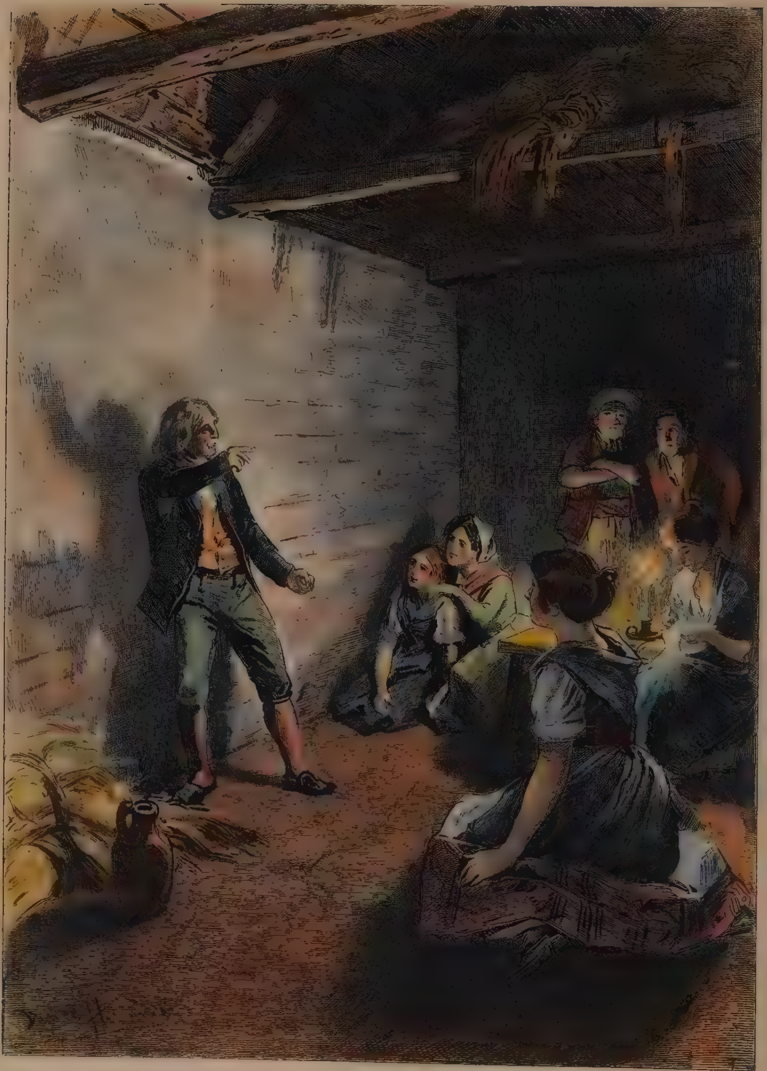
The Human Comedy

SCENES OF COUNTRY LIFE

VOLUME I



IN THE BENASSIS BARN

Gathered in little groups around three or four candles, some of the women were sewing, others were spinning; several were quite idle, their necks stretched, their heads and eyes turned toward an old peasant who was relating a story.

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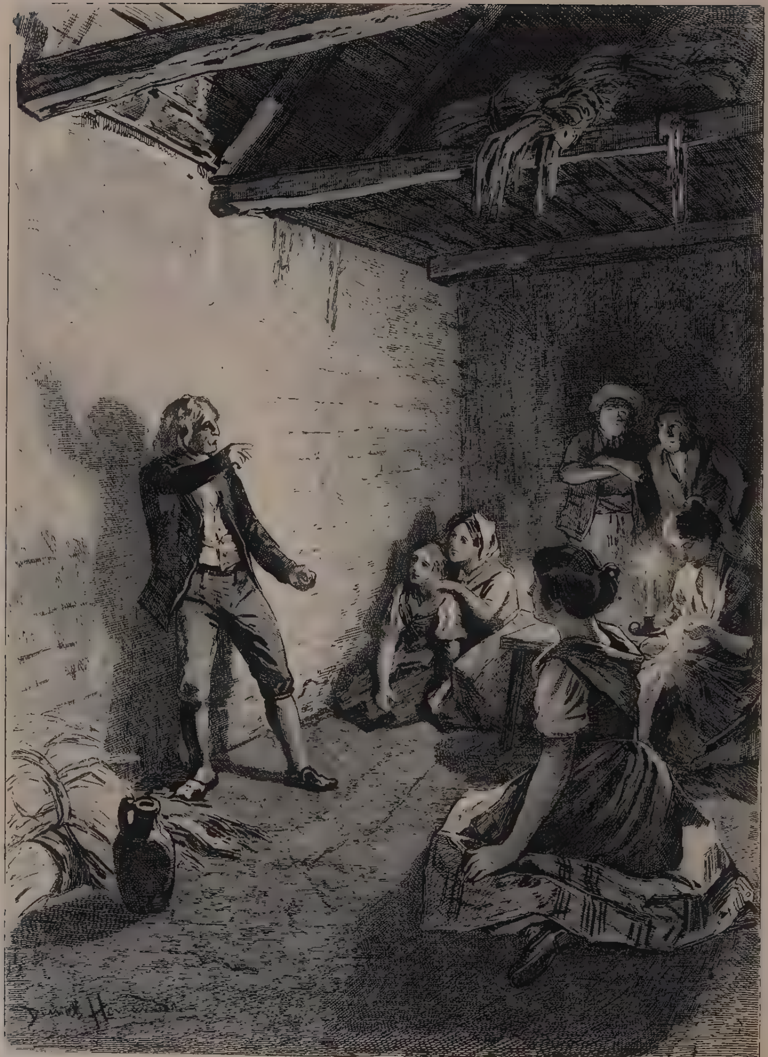

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Honoré de Balzac *NOW FOR THE FIRST TIME COMPLETELY TRANSLATED INTO ENGLISH*

THE COUNTRY DOCTOR BY G. BURNHAM IVES

WITH EIGHT ETCHINGS BY CHARLES GIROUX, AFTER PAINTINGS BY DANIEL HERNANDEZ

IN ONE VOLUME

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THE COUNTRY DOCTOR

For wounded hearts, shadow and silence

TO MY MOTHER

I

THE COUNTRY AND THE MAN

On a fine spring morning in the year 1829, a man of about fifty years of age was riding on horseback along a mountainous road which leads to a large country-town not far from the Grande-Chartreuse. This town is the chief place in a populous canton circumscribed by a long valley. A torrent with a rocky bed, frequently dry, filled at this time by the melting of the snows, waters this valley compressed between two parallel mountains, which command in every direction the peaks of Savoy and Dauphiny. Although there is a general resemblance among the landscapes enclosed between the chain of the two Mauriennes, the canton through which the stranger was riding presents undulations of the ground and accidents of light and shadow which may be vainly sought for elsewhere. Sometimes the valley, suddenly widening, offers to the eye an irregular carpet of that verdure which the constant irrigation due to the mountains preserves so fresh and so pleasant to view at all seasons. Sometimes a saw-mill presents its humble constructions, picturesquely placed, its provision of long fir-trees stripped of their bark, and

its water-course, diverted from the torrent and conducted through great square conduits of wood, from the crevices of which a sheet of thin streams issues. Here and there, thatched cottages, surrounded by gardens full of fruit-trees covered with blossoms, suggest the ideas inspired by an industrious poverty. Farther on, houses with red roofs, of flat and rounded tiles similar to fishes' scales, represent the ease gained by long industry. Over every door may be seen the basket suspended in which the cheeses are drying. Everywhere, the openings, the enclosures, are enlivened by vines embracing, as in Italy, the dwarf elms, the leaves of which are fed to cattle.

In some places, the hills, by one of Nature's caprices, are brought so close together that there is no more room for mills, or fields, or thatched cottages. Separated only by the torrent which rages along in its cascades, the two high granite walls rear themselves, tapestried by firs with black foliage, and by beech-trees a hundred feet high. All upright, all oddly colored by spots of moss, all varied in foliage, these trees form magnificent colonnades, bordered above and below the road by irregular hedges of arbutes, viburnum, boxwood, and sweet-briar. The living odors of these bushes and undergrowth were at this moment mingling the wild perfumes of mountain nature with the penetrating scent of the young shoots of the larches, the poplars, and the resinous pines. A few clouds sailed among the rocks, alternately veiling and revealing the gray summits, often

as vaporous as the mists whose fleecy shreds were torn upon them. At every moment the country-side varied in aspect and the sky in light; the mountains changed color, the slopes their shades, the valleys their forms,—multiplied images which unexpected oppositions, whether it was a ray of sun traversing the tree-trunks, whether a natural clearing or some fallen rocks, rendered delightful to the eye in the midst of the silence, in the season when everything is young, when the sun illumines a pure sky. In short, it was a beautiful country, it was France!

A man of tall stature, the traveller was dressed completely in blue cloth as carefully brushed as was probably every morning the glossy coat of his horse, on which he sat, firm and upright, like an old cavalry officer. If, indeed, his black cravat and his doe-skin gloves, the pistols which filled his holster and the portmanteau well strapped on his horse's croup, had not indicated the soldier, his embrowned countenance pitted by the small-pox, but with regular features and characterized by an apparent indifference, his decided manner, the security of his glance, the carriage of his head, everything would have betrayed those regimental habits of which it is impossible for the soldier ever to divest himself, even after he has returned to domestic life. Any other would have marvelled at the beauties of this Alpine nature, so smiling where it opens into the great valleys of France; but the officer, who had doubtless traversed those countries into which the French armies were transported by the imperial wars, enjoyed this landscape without

manifesting any surprise at these manifold changes. Astonishment is a sensation which Napoléon seems to have destroyed in the souls of his soldiers,—thus, the calmness of visage is a certain sign by which an observer may recognize the men formerly enrolled under the ephemeral but imperishable eagles of the great Emperor.

This man was, in fact, one of those soldiers, now sufficiently rare, whom the bullets had respected, although he had served on all those battle-fields on which Napoléon had commanded. His life had had in it nothing extraordinary. He had fought well, as a simple and loyal soldier, doing his duty as well at night as in daytime, far from his chief as well as near him, never dealing a useless sabre-stroke, and incapable of dealing one too many. If he wore in his buttonhole the rosette of the officers of the Legion of Honor, it was because, after the battle of the Moskowa, the unanimous voice of his regiment had designated him as the most worthy of that great day to receive it. Of the restricted number of these men seemingly cold, timid in self-assertion, always at peace with themselves, men whose spirit is humiliated by the very thought of soliciting a favor of any nature whatsoever, his promotion had been conferred upon him only in accordance with the slow laws of seniority. Sub-lieutenant in 1802, in 1829 he was only a major, notwithstanding his gray moustaches; but his life was so clean that no man in the army, were he a general, accosted him without experiencing a sentiment of involuntary respect,—an incontestable

advantage which, perhaps, his superiors did not forgive him. In recompense, the simple soldiers all vowed to him something of that feeling which children bear to a good mother; for, toward them, he knew how to be at once indulgent and severe. Having been a soldier like themselves, he knew all the unhappy joys and the joyous miseries, the pardonable or punishable going astray of the soldiers, whom he always called *his children*, and whom he willingly allowed in a campaign to take provisions or forage from the civilians.

As to his private history, it was buried in the most profound silence. Like most of the military men of the epoch, he had seen the world only through the smoke of the cannon, or during the moments of peace so rare in the midst of the European contest sustained by the Emperor. Had he, or had he not, thought of marriage? The question remained unanswered. Although no one entertained any doubt that the commandant Genestas had had love adventures while traversing cities and countries, while assisting at the fêtes given or received by the regiments, nevertheless, no one had the slightest certainty of it. Without being prudish, without refusing a party of pleasure, without offending the military customs, he was silent or responded laughingly when questioned concerning his amours. To these words: "And you, commandant?" addressed to him by an officer after drinking, he replied:

"Let us drink, messieurs!"

A species of Bayard without ostentation, Monsieur

Pierre-Joseph Genestas thus had nothing poetical or romantic about him, so commonplace did he seem. His appearance was that of a substantial man. Although his pay was his sole fortune, and though his retirement was his only future, nevertheless, like shrewd old traders who have acquired from misfortunes an experience which resembles obstinacy, the major kept always in reserve two years' pay and never expended all his receipts. He was so little of a gambler that he looked at his boots when in company a new player was wanted or some addition to the stakes at écarté. But, if he allowed himself no unusual expenses, he was not wanting in any of the customary usages. His uniforms lasted him longer than those of any other officer of the regiment, in consequence of the care arising from the mediocrity of his fortune,—a habit which had now become with him mechanical. Perhaps he would have been suspected of avarice had it not been for the admirable disinterestedness, the fraternal readiness with which he opened his purse to some heedless young fellow ruined by a deal at cards or by some other folly. It would seem that he had formerly lost heavy sums at play, so much delicacy did he bring to his obliging; he did not consider that he had the right to control the actions of his debtor, and never spoke to him of his indebtedness. A child of the troop, alone in the world, he had made for himself a country of the army and a family of his regiment. Consequently, the motive of his worthy economy was rarely sought for, pleasure was taken in attributing it to the sufficiently

natural desire to provide for the comfort of his old days.

On the eve of becoming lieutenant-colonel of cavalry, it was to be presumed that his ambition consisted in being able to retire, after some campaign, with the pension and the epaulettes of colonel. If the young officers discussed Genestas after drill, they classed him among the men who have obtained at college the prize of excellence, and who, throughout their life, remain precise, upright, without passions, useful and insipid as white bread; but the serious men judged him very differently. Often some look, often some expression full of good sense, as is the speech of the savage, escaped this man and betrayed the tempests of the soul within him. Carefully considered, his calm forehead revealed the power of imposing silence on the passions and of thrusting them down into the bottom of his heart, a power dearly conquered by the habit of dangers and the unforeseen disasters of war. The son of a peer of France, who had newly joined the regiment, having said one day, when speaking of Genestas, that he would have been the most conscientious of priests or the most honest of grocers:

"Add, the least fawning of marquises!" he replied, surveying the young fop, who had not thought himself overheard by his commandant.

The auditors broke out laughing,—the father of the lieutenant was the flatterer of all in authority, an elastic man accustomed to rebounding over all revolutions, and the son took after the father. There are to be met with in the French armies a few of

these characters, ingenuously great on occasions, becoming simple again after the action, careless of glory, forgetful of danger; there are perhaps to be met with a great many more than the defects of human nature would permit us to suppose. However, we should be strangely mistaken in thinking that Genestas was perfect. Mistrustful, given to violent outbursts of rage, obstinate in discussions and wishing above all to be acknowledged right when he was in the wrong, he was full of the national prejudices. He had preserved from his life of a soldier an inclination for good wine. If he left the dinner-table in all the decorum of his grade, he appeared serious, meditative, and he was not then willing to admit anyone into the secret of his reflections. Finally, if he were sufficiently well acquainted with the manners and customs of the world and the laws of politeness, a species of regulations which he observed with military stiffness; if he had a natural and acquired intelligence, if he were well acquainted with tactics, manœuvres, the theory of equestrian fencing and the difficulties of the veterinary art, his studies had been prodigiously neglected. He knew, but vaguely, that Cæsar was a Roman consul or emperor; Alexander, a Greek or a Macedonian; he would have granted you the one or the other origin or quality without discussion. Consequently, when the conversation was scientific or historical, he became grave and confined his participation in it to little approving nods of the head, like a profound man who had attained to Pyrrhonism.

When Napoléon wrote from Schönbrunn, the 13th of May, 1809, in the bulletin addressed to the grand army, then masters of Vienna, that, *like Medea, the Austrian princes had cut the throats of their children with their own hands*, Genestas, newly commissioned captain, was not willing to compromise the dignity of his grade by asking who was Medea; he relied upon the genius of Napoléon, certain that the emperor could utter only official statements to the grand army and to the house of Austria; he concluded that Medea was an archduchess of equivocal conduct. Nevertheless, as the thing might concern the military art, he was uneasy about the Medea of the bulletin until the day when Mademoiselle Raucourt revived *Medea*. After having read the announcement, the captain did not fail to go in the evening to the Théâtre Français, to see the celebrated actress in this mythological rôle, concerning which he enquired of his neighbors. However, a man who, as a simple soldier, had had enough energy to learn to read, to write, and to count, naturally comprehended that, as a captain, he should inform himself. Accordingly, since that period, he had been reading eagerly the romances and the books of the day, which gave him half information of which he made tolerably good use. In his gratitude to his professors, he went so far as to take up the defence of Pigault-Lebrun, saying that he found him instructive and often profound.

This officer, whose acquired prudence prevented him from undertaking any useless proceeding, had

left Grenoble and was proceeding toward the Grande-Chartreuse, after having obtained the day before from his colonel a week's leave of absence. He did not intend to make a long stage; but, deceived from one locality to another by the mendacious statements of the peasants whom he interrogated, he deemed it prudent not to ride farther without comforting his stomach. Although he had but a slight chance of finding a housewife in her dwelling at a season when every one was occupied in the fields, he stopped before some thatched cottages which stood around a common space, thus describing a sufficiently irregular square place, open to all comers. The soil of this family territory was solid and well swept, though cut by ditches for manure. Rose-bushes, ivy, and tall grasses were growing along the cracked walls. At the entrance of the open space was a shabby gooseberry-bush on which some rags were drying.

The first inhabitant that Genestas encountered was a pig wallowing in a pile of straw which, at the sound of the horse's hoofs, grunted, raised its head, and put to flight a great black cat. A young peasant-girl, carrying on her head a bundle of herbs, suddenly appeared, followed at a distance by four little brats, all in rags, but hardy, noisy, with bold eyes, pretty, brown of skin, real little devils who resembled angels. The sunshine sparkled and gave something indescribably pure to the air, to the cottages, to the dung-heaps, to the dishevelled troop. The soldier asked if it were possible to have a glass of milk. For sole reply, the young girl uttered a

hoarse cry. An old woman suddenly presented herself on the threshold of a cabin, and the young peasant passed into a stable after having indicated by a gesture the old woman, whom Genestas approached, not without carefully directing his horse so as not to injure the children who were already running around his legs. He repeated his request, which the good woman flatly refused to grant. She did not wish, she said, to skim the cream off the pots of milk that were destined for the butter-making. The officer replied to this objection by promising to pay well for the damage; he attached his horse to the upright of a door and entered the cottage. The four children who belonged to this woman appeared to be all of the same age, an odd circumstance which struck the commandant. The old woman had a fifth, almost hanging to her skirts, who, feeble, pale, sickly, doubtless claimed her greatest cares; consequently, it was the well-beloved, the Benjamin.

Genestas seated himself at the corner of a high chimney-place without a fire, on the mantelpiece of which was a Virgin in colored plaster holding in her arms the infant Jesus. A sublime symbol! The earth served for the floor of this house. In the course of time, the ground, at first beaten down, had become uneven, and, although clean, it presented the callosities of an orange-rind. In the hearth were hung up a *sabot* full of salt, a frying-pan, and a large kettle. The back of the apartment was filled by a four-post bed furnished with an open-work valance. Here and there were three-legged stools, made by

stakes inserted in a bit of beech-wood plank, a kneading-trough, a large wooden ladle for dipping up water, a pail and some earthenware bowls for milk, a spinning-wheel on the bread-trough, some stands for the cheese, black walls, a worm-eaten door having an impost with an opening for light,—such were the decorations and the furnishing of this poor dwelling. Here, then, took place the drama at which the officer assisted as a spectator, he tapping the floor with his riding-whip without any suspicion of this coming drama.

When the old woman, followed by her scabby Benjamin, had disappeared through a door which led into her milk-room, the four children, after having sufficiently examined the soldier, commenced by ridding themselves of the pig. The animal, with which they habitually played, having appeared on the threshold of the door, the urchins threw themselves upon it so vigorously, and applied such characteristic slaps to it, that it was forced to make a prompt retreat. The enemy once outside, the children next attacked a door, the latch of which, yielding to their efforts, escaped from the worn catch that retained it; then they precipitated themselves into a sort of fruit-closet, where the commandant, amused by this scene, presently saw them occupied in gnawing dried plums. The old woman with the parchment visage and the dirty rags re-entered at this moment, holding in her hand a pot of milk for her guest.

"Ah! the good-for-nothings!" she said.

THE ORPHAN ASYLUM

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She followed the children, grabbed each of them by the arms and threw them out into the room, but without taking from them their prunes, and closed carefully the door of her granary of abundance.

"There, there, my little ones, do be good.—If one was not watchful, they would eat up the pile of prunes, the crazy things!" she said, looking at Genestas.

Then she seated herself upon a stool, took the scabby one between her knees and began to comb it, washing its head with a feminine dexterity and maternal care. The four little thieves remained, some standing, others leaning against the bed or the bread-trough, all of them dirty and running at the nose, very healthy otherwise, crunching their prunes without saying a word, but looking at the stranger with a sly and scornful air.

"Are these your children?" asked the soldier of the old woman.

"Excuse me, monsieur, they are the children from the hospital; they give me three francs a month and a pound of soap for each of them."

"But, my good woman, they must cost you twice as much."

"Monsieur, that is just what Monsieur Benassis says to us; but, if others take the children for the same price, we must do the same. It is not everyone who wants them who can have the children! you have to have the cross and the banner to obtain them. The milk we give them costs nothing, so that they are but little expense to us. Moreover, three

francs, monsieur, that is a sum. There is fifteen francs found, not counting the five pounds of soap. In our cantons, how much you have to break your heart in order to make ten sous a day!"

"You have, then, some land in your possession?" asked the commandant.

"No, monsieur. I had some in the time when my husband was living, but, since his death, I have been so unfortunate that I have been forced to sell it."

"Well," said Genestas, "how can you come to the end of the year free of debt with this occupation of feeding, cleaning, and bringing up children at two sous a day?"

"But," she replied, still combing her little scabby one, "we do not come to the Saint-Sylvestre without being in debt, my dear monsieur. What would you have! the good Lord allows it. I have two cows. Then, my daughter and I, we glean during the harvest; in winter, we gather wood; then, in the evenings, we spin. Ah! for example, we do not want to have every year a winter like the last one. I owe seventy-five francs to the miller for flour. Luckily, it is the miller of Monsieur Benassis—Monsieur Benassis, there is a friend of the poor! He has never demanded what was due him from anyone, he will not commence with us. Moreover, our cow has a calf; that will also help us out a little."

The four orphans, for whom all human protection was represented by the affection of this old peasant-woman, had finished their prunes. They took advantage of the attention with which their mother

regarded the officer while talking to him to close up in serried columns in order to once more spring up the latch which separated them from the good heap of prunes. They went at it, not as the French soldiers go to the assault, but silent as the Germans, urged on as they were by naïve and unblushing greediness.

"Ah! the little rogues! Will you stop?"

The old woman rose, took the strongest of the four, gave him a tap on the posteriors, and threw him outdoors; he did not cry, the others remained quite aghast.

"They give you a great deal of trouble—"

"Oh! no, monsieur, but they smell my prunes, the little ones. If I were to leave them alone a moment, they would burst themselves."

"You love them?"

To this question the old woman raised her head, looked at the soldier with a mildly bantering air, and replied:

"Do I love them! I have already given up three of them," she added, sighing; "I keep them only till they are six years old."

"But where is your own?"

"I lost it."

"How old are you, then?" asked Genestas, to undo the effect of his last question.

"Thirty-eight, monsieur. Coming next Saint-Jean, it will be two years since my man died."

She finished the toilet of the little sufferer, who seemed to thank her by a pale and tender look.

"What a life of abnegation and of labor!" thought the horseman.

Under this roof, worthy of the stable in which Jesus Christ was born, were fulfilled cheerfully and without pretence the most difficult duties of maternity. What hearts buried in the most profound forgetfulness! What riches and what poverty! Soldiers, better than other men, know how to appreciate what there is of the magnificent in the sublime in sabots, in the Gospel in rags. Elsewhere may be found the Book, the text illuminated, embroidered, ornamented, bound in moire, in taffeta, in satin; but here was certainly the spirit of the Book. It would have been impossible not to have believed in some religious meaning of Heaven, on seeing this woman, who had made herself mother as Jesus Christ made himself man, who gleaned, suffered, got herself into debt for these forsaken children, and deceived herself in her reckoning, without being willing to recognize that she was ruining herself to be a mother. The sight of this woman compelled the admission of some sympathy between the good here below and the intelligences on high; so the commandant Genestas looked at her, shaking his head.

"Is Monsieur Benassis a good doctor?" he asked, at length.

"I do not know, my dear monsieur, but he cures the poor for nothing."

"It appears," he said, talking to himself, "that this man is decidedly a man."

"Oh! yes, monsieur, and a worthy man!—Thus

there are scarcely any people around here who do not put him in their prayers, morning and evening."

"This is for you, mother," said the soldier, giving her some coins. "And this is for the children," he continued, adding a crown.—"Am I still far from the house of Monsieur Benassis?" he asked, when he had mounted his horse.

"Oh! no, my dear monsieur, at the most a short league."

The commandant departed, convinced that he had at least two leagues to traverse. Nevertheless, he presently perceived through the trees a first group of houses, then the roofs of the town gathered around a steeple which rose cone-shaped, and the slates of which were secured to the angles of the structure by strips of tin sparkling in the sun. This style of roof, original in its effect, announced the frontiers of Savoy, where it is in common use. In this locality the valley is wide. Several houses, pleasantly situated in the little plain, or along the torrent, gave animation to this well-cultivated landscape, fortified on all sides by the mountains, and without any apparent outlet. At a few steps from this town, seated on the mid-slope, looking southward, Genestas stopped his horse under an avenue of elms, before a troop of children, and inquired of them which was the house of Monsieur Benassis. The children first looked at one another, and examined the stranger with the air with which they observe everything which presents itself for the first time to their

eyes,—so many countenances, so much curiosity, so many ideas. Then the one with the most effrontery, the most laughing one of the band, a little fellow with bright eyes, with bare and dirty feet, repeated after him, according to the habit of children:

"The house of Monsieur Benassis, monsieur?"

And he added:

"I will take you to it."

He walked before the horse, as much to acquire a sort of importance by accompanying a stranger as with a childish willingness to oblige, or to obey the imperative need of movement which, at that age, rules the mind and the body. The officer followed along the principal street of the town, a rocky street, full of windings, bordered with houses constructed according to the whims of the several owners. There a bakery advanced into the middle of the public street; here a gable end presented itself in profile and partly barred the way; then a stream descending from the mountain traversed it in its ditches. Genestas perceived several roofs covered with black shingles, then more thatched ones, a few with tiles, seven or eight in slate, doubtless those of the curé, of the justice of the peace, and the bourgeois of the locality. It was all the negligence of a village outside of which there was to be found no more ground, which seemed to end nowhere and to be attached to nothing; its inhabitants appeared to form but one family outside of the social movement, and to be connected with it only through the tax collector or by some imperceptible ramifications.

When Genestas had gone a few steps farther, he saw higher up on the mountain a large street which overlooked this village. There was, no doubt, an old and a new town. In fact, when the commandant reached a spot where he moderated his horse's pace, he could readily see through a vista the well-built houses whose new roofs enlivened the ancient village. In these new habitations, above which rose an avenue of young trees, he heard the singing peculiar to workmen at labor, the murmur of some workshops, the rasping of files, the sound of hammers, the confused cries of several industries. He noticed the thin smoke of the household chimneys and that more abundant from the forges of the wheelwright, the locksmith, the blacksmith. At last, at the extremity of the village toward which his guide directed him, Genestas perceived scattered farms, fields well cultivated, plantations perfectly well laid out, and, as it were, a little corner of Brie lost in a vast fold of the earth, of which, at first sight, he would not have suspected the existence between the town and the mountains which terminated the landscape.

Presently the child stopped.

"There is the door of *his* house," he said.

The officer dismounted, passed the bridle over his arm, then, reflecting that all labor was entitled to its hire, he drew out some sous from his fob and offered them to the child, who took them with an astonished air, opened great eyes, did not thank him, and remained where he was to see what happened.

"In this locality, civilization has not made much

progress, the religion of labor is still in full observance, and beggary has not yet penetrated," thought Genestas.

More curious than interested, the soldier's guide leaned against a wall breast high which served to enclose the court of the house, and in which is fixed a railing in blackened wood on each side of the pilasters of the gate. This gate, filled in its lower part and formerly painted in gray, is terminated by yellow bars shaped into lance-heads. These ornaments, of which the color has vanished, describe a crescent in the upper part of each leaf of the gate, and come together to form a great pine cone composed by the upper parts of the uprights when the gate is closed. This portal, worm-eaten, spotted by the velvet of the mosses, is half destroyed by the alternative action of the sun and the rain. Surmounted by a few aloes and wall-parietary growing as chance might direct, the pilasters conceal the stems of two acacias *inermis* planted in the court, and the green tufts of which rise in the shape of powder-puffs. The condition of this portal revealed in the proprietor a certain carelessness that appeared to displease the officer; he knit his brows like a man constrained to renounce some illusion.

We are accustomed to judge others from ourselves, and, if we complacently absolve them from our defects, we condemn them severely for not having our qualities. If the commandant desired to find in Monsieur Benassis a careful or methodical man, certainly the gate of his house revealed a complete

indifference in matters of property. A soldier concerned about domestic economy as much as was Genestas might thence promptly draw conclusions from the portal as to the life and character of the unknown,—which, notwithstanding his circumspection, he did not fail to do. The gate was half open, another carelessness! Relying upon this rustic confidence, the officer entered without ceremony into the court, fastened his horse to the bars of the grating, and while he was knotting the bridle, a neighing was heard from a stable toward which the horse and the rider turned their eyes involuntarily; an old domestic opened the door and showed his head, adorned with the cap of red wool in usage in the country and which bears a perfect resemblance to the Phrygian cap with which Liberty is furnished. As there were stalls for several horses, the goodman, after having asked Genestas if he had come to see Monsieur Benassis, offered him for his horse the hospitality of the stable, looking with an expression of tenderness and admiration at the animal, which was a very handsome one. The commandant followed his horse, to see how he would fare. The stable was clean, the bedding was abundant, and the two horses of Benassis had that comfortable appearance which makes a curé's horse recognizable among all other horses. A servant-woman, who had come out from the house upon the perron, seemed to wait officially for the stranger's interrogations,—he having already been informed by the stableman that Monsieur Benassis was not at home.

"Our master has gone to the grain-mill," he said. "If you wish to join him, you have only to follow the path which leads to the field, the mill is at the end of it."

Genestas preferred seeing the country to waiting indefinitely for the return of Benassis, and he set out on the path to the grain-mill. When he had passed the irregular line which the town traces on the side of the mountain, he perceived the valley, the mill, and one of the most delightful landscapes that he had yet seen.

Checked in its course by the base of the mountains, the river formed a little lake above which the peaks rise from stage to stage, their numerous valleys suggested to the eye by the different gradations of light or by the greater or less sharpness of their ridges, all clothed in black firs. The mill, recently constructed at the spot where the torrent falls into the little lake, has all the charm of an isolated dwelling which conceals itself in the midst of waters, among the heads of a number of aquatic trees. On the other side of the river, at the foot of a mountain then feebly lightened at its summit by the red rays of the setting sun, Genestas perceived a dozen abandoned thatched cottages, without windows or doors, their ruined roofs revealing great openings; the land around them was fields, carefully cultivated and sown; their former gardens, converted into meadows, were watered by irrigation arranged with as much art as in Limousin. The commandant stopped mechanically to contemplate the remnants of this village.

Why is it that men never regard ruins, even the most humble, without profound emotion? Doubtless they are for them an image of misfortune, the weight of which is felt by them so diversely. The cemeteries awaken thoughts of death, an abandoned village suggests the troubles of life; death is a foreseen evil, the pains of life are infinite. Is not the infinite the secret of the great melancholies? The officer had reached the stony road to the mill without having been able to explain to himself the abandonment of this village; he inquired for Monsieur Benassis of a miller's assistant seated on the bags of grain at the door of the building.

"Monsieur Benassis has gone there," said the miller, pointing to one of the ruined cottages.

"That village has then been burned?" asked the commandant.

"No, monsieur."

"Why, then, is it in that condition?" asked Genestas.

"Ah! why?" replied the miller, shrugging his shoulders and entering his mill; "Monsieur Benassis will tell you."

The officer crossed over a species of bridge made by great stones between which the torrent ran, and presently arrived at the house designated. The thatch of this habitation was still entire, covered with moss, but without holes, and the doors and windows seemed to be in good condition. On entering, Genestas saw fire in the chimney-place, at the corner of which was an old woman kneeling before

a sick man seated in a chair, and a man standing, with his face turned toward the hearth. The interior of this house formed only one room, lighted through a wretched window-frame furnished with canvas. The floor was of beaten earth. The chair, a table, and a miserable bed constituted all the furniture. Never had the commandant seen anything so simple and so bare, even in Russia, where the cabins of the moujiks resemble dens. Here nothing gave evidence of the things of life, there was not to be found even the slightest utensil necessary for the preparation of the coarsest food. You would have said that it was a dog's kennel, without his platter. Were it not for the bed, a peasant's frock hung on a nail, and sabots stuffed with straw, the only clothing of the sick man, this cottage would have seemed as deserted as the others. The kneeling woman, a very old peasant, was endeavoring to maintain the sick man's feet in a tub filled with brownish water. When he heard a step which the sound of the spurs rendered unusual for ears accustomed only to the monotonous walk of the country people, the man turned toward Genestas, manifesting a sort of surprise, which was shared by the old woman.

"I do not need," said the military man, "to ask if you are Monsieur Benassis. A stranger, impatient to see you, you will excuse me, monsieur, for coming to seek you on your field of battle, instead of having waited for you at your house. Do not inconvenience yourself, attend to your affairs. When you

shall have finished, I will tell you the object of my visit."

Genestas half seated himself on the edge of the table and was silent. The fire diffused through the cottage a light clearer than that of the sun, the rays of which, interrupted by the summits of the mountains, never could reach this part of the valley. By the light of this fire, made with some branches of resinous firs, which gave out a brilliant flame, the soldier could see the face of the man whom a secret interest constrained him to seek, to study, to become perfectly acquainted with. Monsieur Benassis, the physician of the canton, remained with his arms crossed, listened coldly to Genestas, returned his salutation, and turned again toward the invalid, not thinking himself the object of an examination as serious as was that of the soldier.

Benassis was a man of ordinary stature, but broad in the shoulders and deep in the chest. An ample green redingote, buttoned up to the chin, prevented the officer from observing the peculiarly characteristic details of this personage or of his appearance; but the shadow and the immobility in which the body remained served to relieve the face, which was then strongly illumined by the reflection from the fire. This man had a countenance resembling that of a satyr—the same forehead, slightly arched but full of prominences all more or less significative; the same retroussé nose, with an intelligent cleft at the end; the same prominent cheeks. The line of the mouth was sinuous, the lips were thick

and red. The chin protruded abruptly. The eyes, brown and animated by a lively glance to which the pearly lustre of the white gave a great brilliancy, expressed passions that had cooled. The hair, formerly black and now gray, the deep wrinkles of the visage, and the heavy eyebrows, already whitened, the nose, become bulbous and veined, the complexion yellow and marbled with red spots, all revealed in him his fifty years of age and the rude labors of his profession. The officer could only presume upon the capacity of the head, now covered with a cap; but, although concealed by this covering, it appeared to him to be one of those heads commonly called *square heads*. Accustomed, by the relations which he had entertained with the men of energy sought by Napoléon, to recognize the features of those who were destined for great things, Genestas was conscious of some mystery in this obscure life, and he said to himself, on seeing this extraordinary countenance:

"Through what chance has he remained a country doctor?"

After having seriously observed this physiognomy, which, notwithstanding its analogies with other human countenances, betrayed a secret existence not in accord with its apparently commonplace qualities, he was presently led to share the attention which the physician was giving to the sick man, and the sight of this sick man changed completely the current of his thoughts.

Notwithstanding the innumerable sights of his

military life, the old officer experienced a shock of surprise mingled with horror, in perceiving a human face in which thought had never shone; a livid face in which suffering appeared ingenuous and silent, as on the face of an infant which did not yet know how to talk, and which could no longer cry,—in short, the entirely animal face of an old cretin dying. A cretin was the only variety of the human species which the major had not yet seen. At the sight of a forehead of which the skin formed a great round fold, of two eyes similar to those of a cooked fish, of a head covered with thin stunted hair for which nourishment was lacking, this head, quite deprived and denuded of sensitive organs, who would not have experienced, as did Genestas, a sentiment of involuntary disgust for a creature that had neither the graces of the animal nor the privileges of the man, that had never had either reason or instinct, and had never heard or spoken any species of language? On seeing this poor creature coming to the end of an existence which was not life, it seemed difficult to bestow a regret upon him; nevertheless, the old woman looked at him with a touching anxiety, and, with as much affection as if he had been her husband, passed her hands over those parts of his legs which the hot water had not bathed. Benassis himself, after having studied this dead face and these eyes without light, went and gently took the cretin's hand to feel his pulse.

"The bath is not acting," he said, shaking his head, "let us put him back to bed."

He himself took up this mass of flesh, carried it to the couch from which doubtless he had taken it, laid it down carefully on it, stretching out the legs, already almost cold, and placing the hands and the head with all the attentions which a mother could have for her child.

"Everything is over, he is going to die," he added, remaining standing by the side of the bed.

The old woman, with her hands on her hips, looked at the dying, shedding a few tears. Genestas himself remained silent, unable to explain to himself how the death of a being so little interesting could produce such an impression upon him. He already partook instinctively of the boundless pity which these unfortunate creatures inspire in the valleys deprived of all sunshine, into which nature has thrown them. This sentiment, which degenerates into a religious superstition among those families to which the cretins belong, is it not derived from the most beautiful of the Christian virtues, charity, and from that faith which is most conducive to social order, the idea of future recompense, the only one which enables us to accept our miseries? The hope of meriting eternal happiness aids the relatives of these poor beings, and those who surround them, to exercise on a large scale the cares of maternity in its sublime protection incessantly given to an inert creature that at first does not comprehend it, and, later, forgets it. Admirable religion! it has brought to a blind misfortune the succor of a blind benevolence. In those districts in which the cretins are

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found, the population believes that the presence of a being of this species brings good luck to the family. This belief serves to render pleasant a life which, in the heart of cities, would be condemned to the rigors of a false philanthropy, and to the discipline of a hospital. In the upper valley of the Isère, where they abound, the cretins live in the open air with the flocks which they are taught to watch. At least they are free and respected as misfortune should be.

For the last few moments the village bell had been tolling at distant, regular intervals to inform the faithful of the death of one of their number. In traversing space, this contribution of religion arrived faintly at the cottage, through which it diffused a gentle melancholy. Numerous footsteps were heard on the road outside, and announced the presence of a crowd, but a silent crowd. Then the chanting of the Church suddenly broke out and awakened those confused ideas which take possession of the most incredulous souls, obliged to yield to the touching harmonies of the human voice. The Church came to the succor of this creature that did not know her. The curé appeared, preceded by the cross borne by a choir-boy, followed by the sacristan carrying the holy-water vessel, and by some fifty women, old men and children, all come to join their prayers to those of the Church. The doctor and the soldier looked at each other in silence, and retired into a corner to give place to the crowd, which knelt within and without the cottage. During the consoling ceremony of the viaticum, celebrated for this being that

had never sinned, but to which the Christian world bade adieu, the greater number of these gross visages were sincerely affected to tenderness. Tears rolled down the rude cheeks creased by the sun and browned by labor in the open air. This sentiment of voluntary relationship was quite simple. There was no person in the commune who would not have pitied this poor being, who would not have given him his daily bread;—had he not found a father in every child, a mother in the most light-hearted little girl?

"He is dead," said the curé.

This speech excited the most sincere consternation. The tapers were lighted. Several persons wished to watch through the night with the body. Benassis and the officer went out. At the door, some peasants stopped the physician to say to him:

"Ah! monsieur the mayor, if you did not save him, it was doubtless because God wished to recall him to Himself."

"I did my best, my children," replied the doctor.—"You would not believe, monsieur," said he to Genestas, when they were at the distance of a few steps from the abandoned village, the last inhabitant of which had just died, "how much of true consolation there is in the words of those peasants for me. Ten years ago I was all but stoned in that village, to-day deserted, but then inhabited by thirty families."

Genestas put so visible an interrogation into the expression of his countenance and into his gesture, that the physician related to him, as they walked along, the history foreshadowed by this opening.

"Monsieur, when I came to establish myself here, I found in this part of the canton a dozen cretins," said the doctor, turning to indicate to the officer the ruined houses. "The situation of this hamlet in a bottom without any current of air, near a torrent whose waters come from the melting snows, deprived of the benefits of the sun, which lightens only the summit of the mountain, everything there favored the propagation of this frightful malady. The laws do not forbid the pairing of these unfortunates, protected here by a superstition the strength of which was unknown to me, which I at first condemned, then admired. Cretinism would then have extended from this locality as far as the valley. Would it not be a great service to the State to arrest this contagion, physical and intellectual? Notwithstanding its urgency, this benefit might well cost the life of him who undertook to bring it about.

"Here, as in other social spheres, in order to accomplish good, it is necessary to run against, not interests, but something more dangerous to deal with, religious ideas converted into superstitions, the most indestructible form of human ideas. I was afraid of nothing. In the first place, I solicited the post of mayor of the canton, and obtained it; then, after having received the verbal approbation of the prefect, I purchased the removal by night of some of these unfortunate creatures to the slopes of Aiguebelle, in Savoy, where there are many of them and where they would be very well taken care of. As soon as this act of humanity became known, I was held in

horror by the entire population. The curé preached against me. Notwithstanding my efforts to explain to the most intelligent of the town the importance of the expulsion of these cretins, notwithstanding the gratuitous attention which I gave to the sick of the country, I was fired at from the corner of a wood. I went to see the Bishop of Grenoble and requested from him the removal of the curé. Monseigneur was good enough to permit me to choose a priest who could associate himself with my works, and I had the happiness to encounter one of those beings who seem to have fallen from Heaven. I pursued my enterprise. After having labored with the intelligent, I deported at night six other cretins.

"In this second attempt I had for defenders some of those who were under obligations to me, and the members of the council of the commune, whose avarice I appealed to by proving to them the costliness of the support of these poor beings, how profitable it would be for the town to convert the lands possessed by them without titles into commons, of which the town had none. I had the rich on my side; but the poor, the old women, the children, and some obstinate ones remained hostile to me. Unfortunately, my last deportation was incompletely carried out. The cretin whom you have just seen had not returned to his house, had not been taken, and found himself the next morning, alone of his kind, in the village in which there still remained a few families, the individuals of which, almost imbecile, were at least exempt from cretinism. I wished to complete my work,

and came by day, in official costume, to take this unfortunate from his dwelling. My intention was known as soon as I left my house, the friends of the cretin hastened before me, and I found before his cottage an assemblage of women, of children, of old men, who all saluted me with insults accompanied by a shower of stones.

"In the midst of this tumult, in which I would perhaps have perished a victim of the genuine intoxication which seizes a crowd transported by the cries and the agitation of feelings expressed in common, I was saved by the cretin! This poor being came out of his cabin, uttered his clucking sound, and appeared like the supreme chief of these fanatics. At this apparition, the cries ceased. The idea came to me to propose an agreement, and I was able to explain it by favor of the calm so happily obtained. My supporters would, doubtless, not dare not to sustain me under these circumstances, their help was necessarily purely passive, these superstitious folk would watch with the greatest zeal over the preservation of their last idol, it appeared to me to be impossible to take it from them. I promised, therefore, to leave the cretin at peace in his house, on condition that no one should approach it, that the families of this village should cross the stream and come to lodge in the town, in new houses which I took the charge of building, joining to them lands the cost of which, later, was to be returned to me by the commune.

"Well, my dear monsieur, it took me six months to overcome the resistance which was made to the

execution of this contract, notwithstanding the advantages which it offered to the families of this village. The affection of country people for their hovels is an inexplicable fact. However insalubrious his thatched cottage may be, a peasant is much more strongly attached to it than a banker is to his hôtel. Why? I do not know. Perhaps the strength of feelings is in proportion to their rarity. Perhaps the man who lives but little in thought lives much in things, and the less of them he possesses, the more, doubtless, he loves them. Perhaps it is with the peasant as with the prisoner—he does not scatter the forces of his soul, he concentrates them upon a sole idea, and thus attains a great energy of feeling. Pardon these reflections in a man who rarely exchanges his ideas. Moreover, do not believe, monsieur, that I occupy myself much with empty ideas. Here, everything must be practice and action. Alas! the fewer ideas these poor creatures have, the more difficult it is to make them understand their true interests. Therefore I have resigned myself to all the minute details of my enterprise. Each one of them said to me the same thing, one of those things full of good sense which do not admit of any reply: 'Ah! monsieur, your houses are not yet built!' 'Well,' I replied to them, 'promise me to come and live in them as soon as they are finished.'

"Fortunately, monsieur, I secured a decision that our town owns the whole mountain at the foot of which is situated the village now abandoned. The value of the wood growing on the heights sufficed

to pay for the lands and for the promised houses, which were built. When a single one of my recalcitrant households had moved in, the others were not long in following. The benefits which resulted from this change were too evident not to be appreciated by those who clung most superstitiously to their village without sun, which is as much as to say, without soul. The conclusion of this affair, the acquiring of the communal property, the possession of which was confirmed to us by the Council of State, secured me great importance in the canton. But, monsieur, how much trouble!" said the doctor, stopping, and lifting one hand which he let fall again with an eloquent gesture. "I alone know the distance from the town to the prefecture, from which nothing issues, and from the prefecture to the Council of State, in which nothing enters.—Well," he resumed, "peace to the powers that be, they yielded to my importunities; that is a great deal. If you could know the good that may be done by a signature carelessly given!—Monsieur, two years after having undertaken such great little things and carried them to completion, all the poor households of my commune owned at least two cows each, and sent them to pasture on the mountain, where, without waiting for the authorization of the Council of State, I have carried out a system of transverse irrigation similar to those of Switzerland, of Auvergne, and of Limousin.

"To their great surprise, the townspeople saw excellent pastures spring up there, and they obtained a greater quantity of milk, thanks to the better quality

of the herbage. The results of this conquest were very great. Everyone imitated my irrigation. The meadows, the cattle, all the productions, multiplied. From that time I could without fear undertake the amelioration of this corner of the earth, yet uncultivated, and the civilization of its inhabitants, up to this period deprived of intelligence. Ah! monsieur, we solitary people are great talkers:—if anyone asks us a question, there is never any telling where the reply will stop; when I arrived in this valley, the population was seven hundred souls; at present, it amounts to two thousand. The affair of the last cretin has secured for me the esteem of everybody. After having constantly displayed to those under my charge mildness and firmness both at once, I have become the oracle of the canton. I did everything to merit confidence without soliciting it or appearing to desire it; only, I endeavored to inspire in all the greatest respect for my person by the exactitude with which I fulfilled all my engagements, even the most frivolous ones. After having promised to take care of the poor being whom you have just seen die, I watched over him better than his previous protectors had done. He was nourished, cared for, like the adopted child of the commune. Later, the inhabitants came to appreciate the service which I had rendered them despite themselves. Nevertheless, they still retain a remnant of their superstition; I am far from blaming them for it; has not their worship of the cretin often served me as a text to urge those who are intelligent to aid the unfortunate? But

here we are," Benassis added, after a pause, perceiving the roof of his house.

Far from expecting from this listener the slightest phrase of eulogy or of thanks, while relating this episode of his administrative life, he seemed to have yielded to that ingenuous need of expansion which those who live retired from the world feel so strongly.

"Monsieur," said the commandant to him, "I have taken the liberty of putting my horse in your stable, and you will have the goodness to excuse me when I have informed you of the object of my journey."

"Ah! what is it?" asked Benassis, seeming to come out of his preoccupation and to remember that his companion was a stranger.

His naturally frank and communicative character had led him to welcome Genestas as an acquaintance.

"Monsieur," replied the soldier, "I have heard of the almost miraculous cure of Monsieur Gravier, of Grenoble, whom you took into your house. I come in the hope of obtaining the same care, without having the same claim to your kindness—however, perhaps I may merit it! I am an old military man whose old wounds leave him no repose. You will perhaps require a week to examine the condition in which I am, for my pains only return at intervals, and—"

"Well, monsieur," said Benassis, interrupting him, "the chamber of Monsieur Gravier is always ready; come in—"

They entered the house, the door of which was pushed open by the doctor with a vivacity which Genestas attributed to the pleasure of having a lodger.

"Jacquotte," cried Benassis, "monsieur will dine here."

"But, monsieur," objected the soldier, "would it not be well for us to arrange as to the price?—"

"The price of what?" said the doctor.

"Of my board. You cannot keep me, me and my horse, without—"

"If you are rich," replied Benassis, "you will pay well; if not, I wish nothing."

"Nothing," said Genestas, "seems to me too dear. But, rich or poor, ten francs a day, not counting the price of your services, will that be agreeable to you?"

"Nothing is more disagreeable to me than to receive any price whatever for the pleasure of exercising hospitality," replied the physician, knitting his brows. "As to my services, you will have them only if you please me. The wealthy cannot purchase my time, it belongs to the people of this valley. I wish neither glory nor fortune, I ask of my patients neither praises nor gratitude. The money which you will hand over to me will go to the apothecaries of Grenoble to pay for the medicines indispensable to the poor of the canton."

Whoever had heard these words, thrown out brusquely but without bitterness, would have said inwardly, as did Genestas: "Here is a good sort of man."

"Monsieur," replied the soldier, with his usual tenacity, "I will give you, then, ten francs a day, and you will do with them whatever you like. This being settled, we shall understand each other better," he added, taking the doctor's hand and grasping it with an infectious cordiality. "Notwithstanding my ten francs, you will see very well that I am not an Arab."

After this contest, during which there was not on the part of Benassis the slightest desire to appear either generous or philanthropic, the pretended sick man entered the house of his physician, in which everything was found to be in conformity with the dilapidation of the gate and the garments of the owner. The smallest things there bore witness to the most profound indifference to whatever was not of essential utility. Benassis conducted Genestas through the kitchen, the shortest way to the dining-room. If this kitchen, smoked like that of an inn, was furnished with utensils in sufficient number, this luxury was the work of Jacquotte, an old servant-maid of the curé, who said *we*, and reigned as a sovereign over the physician's household. If there were lengthwise on the mantel of the chimney a warming-pan well polished, Jacquotte probably liked to sleep warm in winter, and, in consequence, warmed the sheets of her master, who, she said, thought of nothing; but Benassis had taken her in consequence of that which would have been for any other an intolerable defect. Jacquotte wished to rule in the household, and the doctor had wished

to find a woman who would rule in his house. Jacquotte bought, sold, mended, changed, placed and displaced, all according to her own good pleasure; never did her master make any observation to her. Thus Jacquotte administered uncontrolled the court, the stable, the man-servant, the kitchen, the house, the garden, and the master. On her own authority, the linen was changed, the laundering done, and the provisions stored. She decided upon the bringing home and the death of the pigs, scolded the gardener, arranged the menu of the déjeuner and the dinner, went from the cellar to the garret, from the garret to the cellar, sweeping out everything according to her own whims, and finding nothing to resist her. Benassis had desired only two things,—to dine at six o'clock, and to expend only a certain sum a month.

A woman who is obeyed by all is always singing; therefore Jacquotte laughed, imitated the nightingale on the stairways, always humming when she was not singing, and singing when she was not humming. Naturally clean, she kept the house clean. If her taste had been different, Monsieur Benassis would have been very unhappy, she said, for the poor man was so little observing that he could be made to eat cabbages for partridges; had it not been for her, he would frequently have kept the same shirt on for a week at a time. But Jacquotte was an indefatigable folder of linen, naturally a polisher of furniture, enamored of a cleanliness quite ecclesiastical, the most painstaking, the most shining, the most sweet-smelling of cleanlinesses. A sworn enemy of dust,

she dusted, washed, whitened ceaselessly. The condition of the exterior gate gave her lively pain. For the last ten years she had drawn from her master on the first of every month the promise to have this gate renewed, to have the walls of the house repainted, and everything arranged *nicely*, and monsieur had not yet kept his word. Therefore, when she was deploring the profound carelessness of Benassis, rarely did she fail to pronounce this sacramental phrase by which were terminated all her eulogies of her master:

"You cannot say that he is stupid, since he does almost miracles in the neighborhood; but he is sometimes stupid all the same, so stupid that you have to put everything in his hand, like an infant!"

Jacquotte loved the house like a thing of her own. Moreover, after having lived in it for twenty-two years, had she not the right to cherish illusions? When he came into the country, Benassis, having found this house for sale in consequence of the death of the curé, had bought everything, walls and ground, furniture, utensils, wine, chickens, the old timepiece with figures, the horse, and the servant-maid. Jacquotte, the model of the species cook, displayed a stout body invariably enveloped in a brown calico, spotted with red dots, laced, tightened in such a manner as to make it seem as if the stuff would crack at the least movement. She wore a round, pleated cap, beneath which her rather pallid face, with a double chin, appeared even whiter than it was. Petite, active, with a quick and dimpled

hand, Jacquotte talked loud and continuously. If she were silent for a moment, and took hold of the corner of her apron to lift it triangularly, this gesture announced some long remonstrance addressed to her master or the man-servant. Of all the cooks of the kingdom, Jacquotte was certainly the happiest. To render her happiness as complete as a happiness can be here below, her vanity found itself ceaselessly gratified, the town accepted her as an intermediate authority placed between the mayor and the rural guard.

On entering the kitchen the master found no one there.

"Where the devil have they gone?" said he.—"Pardon me," he added, turning to Genestas, "for bringing you in this way. The entrance of honor is by the garden, but I am so little accustomed to receiving company, that—Jacquotte!"

To this name, uttered almost imperiously, a woman's voice replied from the interior of the house. A moment later Jacquotte took the offensive by calling in her turn Benassis, who went promptly into the dining-room.

"There you are, monsieur!" she said; "you never do any other way. You always invite company to dinner without giving me notice, and you think that everything is arranged when you have called out: 'Jacquotte!' Are you not going to receive monsieur in the kitchen? Was it not necessary to open the salon, to light the fire in it? Nicole is there and is going to arrange everything. Meanwhile,

walk your monsieur about in the garden for a moment: that will amuse him, that man; if he likes pretty things, show him the late monsieur's row of witch-elms,—I shall have time to prepare everything, the dinner, the service, and the salon."

"Yes. But, Jacquotte," replied Benassis, "this monsieur is going to stay here. Do not forget to give a look at Monsieur Gravier's chamber, to see to the linen and everything, to—"

"You are not going to meddle with the linen just now," replied Jacquotte. "If he sleeps here, I know very well what must be done for him. You have not even been into Monsieur Gravier's chamber for ten months. There is nothing to see there, it is as clean as my eye.—He is then going to live here, this monsieur?" she added, in a softened tone.

"Yes."

"For a long time?"

"Upon my word, I do not know. But what difference does that make to you?"

"Ah! what difference does that make to me, monsieur? Ah! well, what difference does that make to me? Here is, indeed, another! And the provisions, and everything, and—"

Without continuing the flood of words, with which, on any other occasion, she would have assailed her master in reproach for his want of confidence, she followed him into the kitchen. On learning that it was a question of a lodger, she was impatient to see Genestas, to whom she made an obsequious reverence while examining him from head to foot. The

countenance of the soldier had at this moment a melancholy and thoughtful expression which gave him a harsh appearance; the colloquy between the servant and the master seemed to him to reveal in the latter a nullity which caused him, though with regret, to modify the high opinion which he had formed when admiring his persistency in saving this little country-side from the miseries of cretinism.

"He does not please me, this individual!" thought Jacquotte.

"If you are not fatigued, monsieur," said the physician to his pretended patient, "we will take a turn in the garden before dinner."

"Willingly," replied the commandant.

They crossed the dining-room and entered the garden by a sort of antechamber situated at the foot of the stairway, which separated the dining-room from the salon. This apartment, closed by a great glass door, opened on the stone perron, the ornament of the garden façade of the house. Divided into four great equal squares by alleys bordered with boxwood which formed a cross, this garden was terminated by a thick hedge of witch-elms, the pride of the former proprietor. The soldier seated himself on a bench of worm-eaten wood, without noticing the trellises, or the wall-fruit, or the vegetables, of which Jacquotte took such great care, following the traditions of the ecclesiastic gourmand to whom this precious garden owed its origin, indifferent enough as it was to Benassis.

Abandoning the commonplace conversation which he had begun, the commandant said to the doctor:

"What was it that you did, monsieur, in order to triple in ten years the population of this valley in which you found seven hundred souls, and which, as you say, includes to-day more than two thousand?"

"You are the first person who has asked me that question," replied the physician. "If I have had as my object the bringing this little corner of land into its full productiveness, the press of my busy life has not left me the leisure to reflect upon the manner by which I have, on a large scale, like the begging friar, made *soup of pebbles.* Monsieur Gravier himself, one of our benefactors, to whom I have been able to render the service of curing him, did not think of the theory while traversing with me our mountains to see on them the practical results."

There was a moment of silence, during which Benassis meditated, without noticing the piercing look by which his guest endeavored to penetrate him.

"How was that done, my dear monsieur?" he went on; "why, naturally, and in virtue of a social law of attraction between the necessities which we create for ourselves and the methods of satisfying them. Everything is in that. People without wants are poor. When I came to establish myself in this town, there were counted in it a hundred and thirty families of peasants, and, in the valley, about two hundred hearths. The authorities of the country,

in keeping with the public poverty, consisted of a mayor who could not write, and of an associate, a farmer, living at a distance from the commune; of a justice of the peace, a poor devil living on his fees, and obliged to leave the drawing up of documents to his clerk, another unfortunate, scarcely in a condition to comprehend his office. The old curé, having died at the age of seventy, his vicar, an uninstructed man, came to succeed him. These individuals comprised the intelligence of the country and governed it.

"In the midst of this beautiful nature, the inhabitants dwelt in filth and subsisted upon potatoes and the products of their dairies; the cheeses, which the greater number of them carried in little baskets to Grenoble and its environs, constituted the only produce from which they drew a little money. The richest, or the least indolent, sowed some buckwheat for the consumption of the town, sometimes barley or oats, but never wheat. The only manufacturer in the country was the mayor, who owned a saw-mill, and bought at a low price the cuttings of the woods to retail them. The want of roads compelled him to transport his trees, one by one, in the fine season, dragging them with great difficulty, by means of a chain attached to the harness of his horses, and terminated in an iron cramp buried in the wood. To go to Grenoble, either on horseback or on foot, it was necessary to take a broad path which crossed the top of the mountains, the valley was impassable. From here to the first village which you saw on

entering the canton, the handsome road by which you doubtless came was at all seasons nothing but a miry track. No political event, no revolution had ever taken place in this inaccessible region, completely outside the social movement. The name of Napoléon alone had penetrated here; it is here a religion, thanks to two or three soldiers of the country returned to their firesides, and who, in the long evenings, relate to these simple people fabulous adventures of this man and his armies. This return is, moreover, an inexplicable phenomenon. Before my arrival, the young men who went off to the army all remained there. This fact depicts clearly enough the poverty of the country to render it unnecessary for me to describe it to you.

"This, monsieur, was the condition in which I found this canton, with which were connected, on the other side of the mountains, several communes, well cultivated, sufficiently happy, and almost rich. I will not speak to you of the thatched cottages of the town, veritable stables, in which animals and people were then tumbled together, pell-mell. I passed through here in returning from the Grande-Chartreuse. Finding no inn, I was obliged to take lodgings with the vicar, who was temporarily inhabiting this house, then for sale. By putting question after question, I obtained a superficial knowledge of the deplorable condition of this country, of which the beautiful climate, the excellent soil, and the natural productions had filled me with admiration. Monsieur, I was at that time seeking to make for myself

a life other than that of which sorrow had made a burden to me. There suddenly came into my soul one of those thoughts which God sends to us to make us accept our misfortunes. I resolved to educate this country as a preceptor educates a child. Do not give me credit for my benevolence; I was too much actuated by the imperative need of distraction which I felt. I therefore endeavored to employ the remainder of my days in some arduous enterprise. The changes to be introduced into this canton, which nature had made so rich, and which man rendered so poor, would occupy a lifetime; they tempted me by the very difficulty of bringing them about.

"As soon as I was certain of obtaining the house of the curé and a good deal of idle and unprofitable land at a low price, I vowed myself religiously to the condition of country physician, the last of all those which a man thinks of assuming in his own land. I wished to become the friend of the poor without expecting from them the slightest recompense. Oh! I did not give myself up to any illusions, neither concerning the character of the country people nor the obstacles to be encountered in endeavoring to ameliorate the condition of men or things. I have not made any idylls concerning my people, I have accepted them for what they are—poor peasants—neither entirely good nor entirely wicked, to whom a constant labor permits no yielding to sentiments, but who sometimes feel keenly. In short, I comprehended, above all, that I could act upon them only through calculations of self-interest and of immediate

benefit. All peasants are children of Saint Thomas, the doubting apostle: they always wish for facts to support words.

"You will, perhaps, laugh at my début, monsieur," resumed the doctor, after a pause. "I commenced this difficult work by a basket-manufactory. These poor people purchased in Grenoble their little wicker-crates for their cheeses and the indispensable basket-work for their miserable commerce. I suggested to an intelligent young man to take, on a lease, along the torrent, a large portion of the shore which the alluvial deposits enrich annually, and where the osiers might very well grow. After having computed the quantity of basket-work consumed by the canton, I went to dislodge from Grenoble some young workman without any pecuniary resources, a skilful worker. When I had found him, I easily persuaded him to establish himself here by promising to advance him the price of the osiers necessary for his manufacture until my planter of willows was able to furnish them to him. I persuaded him to sell his baskets under the Grenoble price, while making them better. He understood me. The osiers and the willow-work constituted a speculation the results of which would not be appreciated till after four years. You are doubtless aware that the osier is not good to cut till it is three years old.

"During his first campaign, my basket-maker lived and found his provisions as perquisites. He soon after married a woman of Saint-Laurent-du-Pont, who had a little money. He then built himself a

house, healthful, well-aired, the site of which had been selected, the arrangements made, according to my advice. What a triumph, monsieur! I had created an industry in the town, I had brought to it a producer and several workpeople. You will consider my delight childish?—During the first days of the establishment of my basket-maker, I never passed before his shop without feeling the beating of my heart quickened. When, in his new house, with shutters painted in green, and at the door of which is a bench, a vine, and bunches of osiers, I saw a woman, clean, well-dressed, nursing a great infant, pink and white, in the midst of workmen all cheerful, singing, actively constructing their wares, and under the direction of a man who, formerly poor and pallid, now breathed happiness, I admit to you, monsieur, I could not resist the pleasure of making myself a basket-maker for a moment by entering the shop to enquire after their affairs, and I gave myself up to a contentment which I should not know how to describe. I was joyous with the joy of those people and of my own.

"The house of this man, the first who believed firmly in me, became all my hope. Was it not the future of this poor country, monsieur, which already I carried in my heart, as the wife of the basket-maker carried in hers her first nursling?—I had to bring many things to pass, I ran against very many prejudices. I encountered a violent opposition instigated by the ignorant mayor, whose place I had taken, whose influence was disappearing before mine; I wished to

make him my associate and the accomplice of my benefactions. Yes, monsieur, it was in this head, the hardest of all, that I endeavored to diffuse the first enlightenment. I took hold of my man both by his self-love and by his own interests. For six months we dined together, and I gave him a half interest in my plans of amelioration. Very many would have seen in this necessary friendship the most hopelessly wearying part of my task; but was not this man an instrument, and the most valuable of all? Bad luck to him who despises his instrument, or who even throws it carelessly aside! Would I not have been, moreover, very inconsistent if, desiring to better a country, I had recoiled before the idea of bettering a man? The surest means of bringing good fortune is a highway. If we obtained from the municipal council an authorization to construct a good road from here to the road to Grenoble, my associate was the first to profit by it, for, instead of dragging, with great trouble, his trees over bad paths, he could, by means of a good cantonal road, transport them with facility, undertake a large business in lumber of all kinds, and earn, not six hundred miserable francs a year, but handsome sums which would give him one day a certain fortune.

"Finally convinced, this man became my proselyte. During a whole winter my ex-mayor went to drink at the inn with his friends, and was able to demonstrate to our townsmen that a good carriage-road would be a source of fortune for the country by enabling everyone to communicate freely with Grenoble.

When the municipal council had voted for the road, I obtained from the prefect some money from the charitable funds of the department in order to pay for the means of transportation, which the commune was unable to undertake through lack of carts. Finally, in order to bring this great work to a termination more promptly and make its results appreciated immediately by the ignorant, who murmured against me, saying that I wished to re-establish the forced peasant-labor of the old seigneurs, on every Sunday of the first year of my administration I transported the entire population of the town, willingly or by force, women, children, and even old men, to the top of the mountain, where I had traced out myself, on an excellent foundation, the high-road that leads from our village to the road to Grenoble. Abundant materials very fortunately were to be found along this route. This long enterprise required of me a great deal of patience. Sometimes some of them, ignorant of the laws, refused this service in kind; sometimes others, wanting for bread, could not really afford to lose a day; it was therefore necessary to distribute grain to these, and to calm the others by friendly words.

"However, when we had completed two-thirds of this road, which covers about two leagues of the country-side, its advantages had become so well recognized by the inhabitants that the last third was completed with an ardor which surprised me. I enriched the future of the commune by planting a double row of poplars along each of the side-ditches.

To-day these trees are almost a fortune already, and give the appearance of a royal road to our highway, always dry in consequence of its situation, and so well constructed, moreover, that it costs scarcely two hundred francs a year to maintain it; I will show it to you, for you have not seen it,—you came here doubtless by the pretty lower road, another route which the inhabitants wished to make themselves, three years ago, in order to open communications with the establishments which were then being set up in the valley. Thus, monsieur, three years ago, the good public sense of this town, once without intelligence, had acquired ideas which, five years before, a traveller would perhaps have despaired of inculcating. But to proceed.

"The establishment of my basket-maker was a fruitful example given to this poor population. If the road was to be the most direct cause of the future prosperity of the town, it was necessary to excite all the primary industries in order to make fruitful these two germs of comfort and luxury. While aiding the planter of osier beds and the maker of baskets, while constructing my road, I continued my work by insensible degrees. I had two horses; the lumber-dealer, my associate, had three; they could be shod only at Grenoble when they went there; I therefore engaged a blacksmith, who knew a little of the veterinary art, to come here, promising him plenty of work. I encountered on the same day an old soldier sufficiently in trouble about his position, whose whole property consisted

of a pension of a hundred francs, who knew how to read and write; I gave him the place of secretary to the mayor; by a lucky chance, I found him a wife, and his dreams of happiness were accomplished. Monsieur, houses were required for these two new families, for that of my basket-maker and for the twenty-two families which abandoned the cretin village. Twelve other households, the heads of which were workmen,—producers and consumers,—then came to establish themselves here,—masons, carpenters, tilers, joiners, locksmiths, glaziers, who had work for a long time ahead; would they not have to construct their own houses after having built those of others? would they not bring laborers with them?

"During the second year of my administration, seventy houses were built in the commune. One production required another. In peopling the town, I had created new necessities, unknown up to this time to these poor people. A want begets an industry, the industry a business, the business a profit, the profit a prosperity, and the prosperity useful ideas. These different workmen wanted bread already baked; we had a baker. But buckwheat could no longer be the nourishment of this population drawn from its degrading inertia and become essentially active; I had found them eating black grain; I desired to have them change at first to a regimen of rye or of a mixture of wheat and rye, then to see one day in the hands of the poorest a piece of white bread. For my part, the intellectual

progress was closely connected with the sanitary progress. A butcher in a district proclaims as much of intelligence as of riches. Who works, eats, and who eats, thinks. Foreseeing the day when the production of wheat would be necessary, I had carefully examined the character of the soil; I was confident of being able to endow the town with a great agricultural prosperity, and of doubling its population as soon as it should be fully engaged in work. The moment had arrived. Monsieur Gravier, of Grenoble, was the owner of certain lands in the commune from which he drew no revenue, but which could be converted into grain-fields. He is, as you know, chief of division at the prefecture. As much through attachment to his district as vanquished by my importunities, he had already lent himself with great good nature to my requirements; I succeeded in making him comprehend that he had, unknown to himself, worked for his own interests.

"After several days spent in solicitation, in conferences, in measures debated; after having pledged my fortune to guarantee him against the risks of an enterprise concerning which his wife, a narrow woman, endeavored to excite his fears, he consented to lay out here four farms of a hundred arpents each, and promised to advance the sums necessary for the clearing of the ground, the purchase of seed, the instruments of husbandry, the cattle, and the opening of the necessary farm roads. On my side, I constructed two farms, as much to bring under cultivation my idle and unproductive land as to teach

by example the useful methods of modern agriculture. In six weeks the town was increased by three hundred inhabitants. Six farms which would necessarily require several households, enormous clearings to be undertaken, the tilling to be done all called for workmen. The wheelwrights, the terrace-makers, the journeymen, the laborers, flowed in. The road to Grenoble was covered with carts going and coming. There was a general movement throughout the country. The circulation of money aroused in everybody the desire of gain, the apathy had ceased, the town had awakened. I will finish in two words the history of Monsieur Gravier, one of the benefactors of this canton.

"Notwithstanding the mistrust natural enough in a provincial citizen, in a man of bureaus, he, on the faith of my promises, advanced more than forty thousand francs, without knowing whether he would regain them. Each of his farms is to-day leased for a thousand francs; his farmers have so well managed their affairs that each one of them possesses at least a hundred arpents of land, three hundred sheep, twenty cows, ten oxen, five horses, and employs more than twenty persons. To resume. In the course of the fourth year, our farms were completed. We had a grain harvest that seemed miraculous to the country people, abundant as it was naturally on a virgin soil. I often trembled for my work during that fourth year! The rain or a drought might ruin my work by impairing the confidence which I had already inspired. The culture of wheat necessitated

the mill which you have seen, and which brings me in about five hundred francs a year. Thus the peasants say, in their language, that *I have luck,* and believe in me as in their relics. These new constructions, the farms, the mill, the plantations, the roads, have given work to all the men with trades that I have brought here. Although our buildings fully represent the sixty thousand francs which we have invested in the country, this money has been amply returned to us by the revenues created by the consumers.

"My efforts do not cease to animate this budding industry. By my advice, a nursery-gardener came to establish himself in the town, where I preached to the poorest the advisability of cultivating fruit-trees in order to be able one day to acquire at Grenoble the monopoly of the sale of fruits. 'You carry cheese there,' I said to them; 'why not carry there chickens, eggs, vegetables, game, hay, straw, etc.?' Each one of my counsels was the source of a fortune,—it was for whoever would follow it. There was formed, consequently, a multitude of little establishments, the progress of which, slow at first, became from day to day more rapid. Every Monday there now depart from the town for Grenoble more than sixty carts laden with our divers products, and there is more buckwheat gathered to feed the chickens than there was formerly sown to feed the men. The lumber trade, now become too considerable, is subdivided. Since the fourth year of our industrial era, we have had sellers of firewood, of squared lumber, of

planks, of bark, and charcoal-makers. Finally, there have been established four new saw-mills for planks and beams.

"The ex-mayor, in acquiring some commercial ideas, began to feel the need of learning to read and to write. He has compared the price of wood in different localities; he has found such variations, with the advantage in favor of his own business, that he has procured new customers in various places, and he supplies to-day the third of the department. Our means of transportation have increased so rapidly that we keep three wheelwrights and two harness-makers busy, and each of them has not less than three assistants. Finally, we consume so much iron that an edge-tool maker has moved into the town, and has done very well here. The desire of gain develops an ambition which from that period has given my manufacturers and workpeople an impulse which has spread from the town to the canton and from the canton to the department, with the effect of increasing their profits by increasing their sales. I have had only to say one word to indicate to them new openings; their good sense did the rest. Four years sufficed to change the face of this town. When I first passed through here, I did not hear a sound in the streets; but, at the beginning of the fifth year, everything here was living and animated. The joyful chants, the noise of the workshops, and the dull or sharp sound of the tools resounded agreeably in my ears. I saw an active population coming and going, gathered together in a new town, clean,

healthful, well planted with trees. Each inhabitant had the consciousness of his own well-being, and all the countenances expressed the contentment given by a life usefully occupied.

"These five years form in my eyes the first age of the prosperous life of our town," resumed the doctor, after a pause. "During this time I had cleared away everything, sown everything in germ in the heads and in the soil. The progressive movement of the population and of the industries could no longer be arrested. A second age was preparing. Presently, this little world began to desire to be better dressed. There came to us a haberdasher, and with him the shoemaker, the tailor, and the hatmaker. This beginning of luxury secured for us a butcher and a grocer; then a midwife, who became very necessary to me. I lost considerable time in attending to childbirths. The *clearings* gave excellent harvests. Then the superior quality of our agricultural products was maintained by the fertilizers and the manure obtained by the increase in the population. My enterprise could then develop itself fully.

"After having made the houses healthful and gradually brought the inhabitants to nourish themselves better, to clothe themselves better, I desired that the animals should benefit by this commencement of civilization. Upon the care given to cattle depends the beauty of the races and the individuals, consequently that of the products,—I therefore preached the cleaning and making wholesome of the stables. By

a comparison of the profit returned by an animal well lodged, well cared for, with the meagre return from a neglected beast, I brought about insensibly a change in the management of the cattle of the commune,—not one animal suffered. The cows and the oxen were cared for as they are in Switzerland and in Auvergne. The sheepfolds, the stables, the cow-houses, the dairies, the barns, were rebuilt on the models of my constructions and of those of Monsieur Gravier, which are large and well-aired, and consequently salubrious. Our farmers were my apostles: they promptly converted the incredulous by demonstrating to them the soundness of my precepts by the prompt results. As to those who were in want of money, I lent it to them, favoring especially the industrious poor; they served as examples. Following my advice, the defective animals, those that were sickly or mediocre in quality, were sold and replaced by fine specimens.

"Thus it came about that our products, within a given time, became known in the markets as superior to those of the other communes. We had magnificent flocks, and consequently excellent leather. This progress was of the highest importance. For this reason. Nothing is fruitless in rural economy. Formerly our bark sold at a very low price, and our leather had no great value; but, our bark and our leather once bettered, the river permitted us to construct tanneries, tanners came to us, and the industry rapidly increased. Good wine, formerly unknown in the town, where only the

thinnest vintage was drunk, became naturally a necessity; cabarets were established. Then the oldest of the cabarets was enlarged, was transformed into an inn, and furnished mules to the travellers who began to use our road to go to the Grande-Chartreuse. For the last two years we have had a commercial movement sufficient to sustain two innkeepers.

"At the beginning of the second era of our prosperity, the justice of the peace died. Very fortunately for us, his successor was a former notary of Grenoble ruined by an unfortunate speculation, but who had enough property remaining to make him rich in the village. Monsieur Gravier was able to induce him to come here; he has built a handsome house, he has seconded my efforts by joining to them his own; he has laid out a farm and cleared off the brushwood, and to-day he possesses three chalets in the mountain. His family is numerous. He has dismissed the former clerk and the former sheriff and replaced them by men much more capable and, above all, more industrious than their predecessors. These two new households have created a potato distillery and an establishment for washing wool, very useful industries, which the heads of the two families conduct without interference with their official duties. After having established a revenue for the commune, I employed it in building a town-house, in which I established a free school, and lodging-rooms for a primary instructor. I selected to fill this important

position a poor priest who had taken the oath to the constitutional authorities, rejected by the whole department, and who found among us an asylum for his old days. The schoolmistress is a worthy woman, financially ruined, who did not know where to lay her head, and for whom we have arranged a little competence; she has founded a boarding-school for girls to which the rich farmers of the environs are beginning to send their daughters.

"Monsieur, if I have had the right to relate to you up to this point the history of this little corner of the earth in my own name, there comes a time when Monsieur Janvier, the new curé, a true Fénelon reduced to the proportions of a curé, has counted for one-half in this work of regeneration: he has known how to give to the manners and customs of the town a gentle and fraternal feeling which seems to make one family of the entire population. Monsieur Dufau, the justice of the peace, although he came later, merits equally the gratitude of the inhabitants. To sum up to you our situation by figures more significant than my statements, the commune possesses to-day two hundred arpents of woodland and a hundred and sixty arpents of pasturage. Without recourse to increased taxation, it pays an additional sum of a hundred écus to the curé, two hundred francs to the garde champêtre, as much to the schoolmaster and to the schoolmistress; it has five hundred francs for its roads, as much for the repairs of the town-house, the parsonage, the church, and for some other expenses. In fifteen

years from now, it will possess a hundred thousand francs' worth of standing timber, and will be able to meet all its expenses without costing the inhabitants a denier; it will certainly be one of the richest communes in France. But, monsieur, I am perhaps wearying you?" said Benassis to Genestas, seeing his auditor in so thoughtful an attitude that it might well be taken for that of an inattentive man.

"Oh! no," replied the commandant.

"Monsieur," resumed the doctor, "the trade, the industry, the agriculture, and our consumption were only local. Our prosperity was arrested at a certain point. I therefore requested a post-office, retail stores to sell tobacco, powder, and cards; I even induced the collector of taxes, by the inducements of the locality and of our new society, to leave the commune in which, up to this time, he had preferred to live rather than in the chief place of the canton; I contrived to call in, in time and place when needed, each production of which I had made the need felt; I brought in households and industrious people, I communicated to all of them the sense of proprietorship,—thus, in proportion as they acquired money the lands were cleared; the small plots of ground, the small proprietors, spread over the mountain, and gradually brought it under cultivation. The unfortunate poor whom I had found here carrying on foot a few cheeses to Grenoble, now went there comfortably in carts, taking fruit, eggs, chickens, and turkeys. Everything had insensibly enlarged. The worst endowed was he who had only his garden, his

vegetables, his fruits, his early garden-truck, to cultivate.

"Finally,—a sign of prosperity,—no one any longer baked his own bread, so as not to lose any time, and the children watched the flocks. But, monsieur, it was necessary to maintain this industrial centre by ceaselessly throwing into it new supplies. The town had not yet a growing industry that could support this commercial production and necessitate large transactions, an exchange, a market. It is not sufficient for a country to lose nothing on the amount of money which it owns and which forms its capital; you will not augment its prosperity by contriving, with greater or less skill, to make this sum circulate, by the action of production and consumption, through the greatest possible number of hands. That is not the problem. When a country is in full production, and when its productions balance its consumption, it is necessary, in order to create new fortunes and to increase the public wealth, to establish exchanges with abroad which will constantly bring new assets into its commercial balance. It is this idea which has constantly determined the States without territorial base, like Tyre, Carthage, Venice, Holland, and England, to take possession of the commerce of transportation. I sought for our little sphere an analogous idea, in order to create in it a third commercial epoch. Our prosperity, scarcely visible to the eyes of a traveller, for our chief town of the canton resembles all the others, was surprising for me alone. The inhabitants, insensibly

brought together, have not been able to judge of the whole while participating in the movement.

"At the expiration of seven years I encountered two strangers, the true benefactors of this town, which they will perhaps metamorphose into a city. One of them is a Tyrolese, of an incredible skill, who makes shoes for the country people, boots for the fashionables of Grenoble, as no Parisian workman can manufacture them. A poor itinerant musician, one of those industrious Germans who make both the work and the tool, the music and the instrument, he halted in the town on his way from Italy, which he had traversed singing and working. He asked if someone did not need some shoes; he was sent to me; I ordered of him two pairs of boots of which he made the lasts. Surprised at this stranger's skill, I questioned him; I found him exact in his replies; his manner, his face, all confirmed me in the good opinion I had formed of him; I proposed to him to settle in the town, promising to aid his business by all the means in my power, and I placed at his disposition a sufficiently large sum of money. He accepted. I had certain ideas. Our leather, having become much superior in quality, could be in course of time consumed by ourselves in the fabrication of boots and shoes at moderate prices. I was about to begin again on a larger scale the business of the osiers.

"Chance had offered me a man eminently skilful and industrious whom I should enlist in order to give to the town a productive and stable business. The

consumption of the shoemaker's wares is one that never stops, it is a manufacture in which the least advantage is promptly appreciated by the consumer. I had the good fortune not to be deceived, monsieur. To-day we have five tanneries; they consume all the leather of the department, they send for more as far as Provence, and each one possesses its bark-mill. Well, monsieur, these tanneries do not suffice to furnish the Tyrolese with all the leather he needs: he employs no less than forty workmen!— The other man, whose story is no less curious, but which perhaps would be wearisome for you to hear, is a simple peasant who has found a method of making cheaper than anywhere else the broad-brimmed hats worn in the country; he exports them into all the neighboring departments, even to Switzerland and Savoy.

"These two industries, never-ceasing sources of prosperity, if the canton can maintain the quality of the products and their low price, suggested to me the idea of founding here three annual fairs; the prefect, astonished at the industrial progress of this canton, seconded me in obtaining the royal ordinance which instituted them. Last year one of these fairs took place; they are already known in Savoy as the fair of shoes and hats. On learning of these changes, the head clerk of a notary of Grenoble, a young man, poor, but well-educated, a great worker, and to whom Mademoiselle Gravier is betrothed, went to Paris to solicit the establishment of a notary's office; his request was granted. His post

cost him nothing; he has been able to build for himself a house opposite that of the justice of the peace, on the principal square of the new town. We have now a weekly market at which there are very considerable transactions in cattle and grain.

"Next year there will doubtless come to us an apothecary, then a clockmaker, a furniture-dealer, and a bookstore, in short, the superfluities necessary to life. Perhaps we shall end by taking on the style of a little city and by having bourgeois houses. The general instruction has made such progress that I did not encounter in the municipal council the slightest opposition when I proposed to repair, to decorate the church, to build a parsonage, to lay out a fine site for the fair, to plant trees on it, and to survey for streets to be opened later, dry, well-lighted, and well-planned. This is how, monsieur, we have attained to nineteen hundred hearths instead of a hundred and thirty-seven, three thousand horned cattle instead of eight hundred, and, instead of seven hundred souls, two thousand persons in the town, three thousand counting the inhabitants of the valley. There are in the commune twelve rich houses, a hundred families in easy circumstances, two hundred which are prosperous. The rest all work. Everybody can read and write. Finally, we have seventeen subscribers to different journals. You will still meet with enough unfortunates in our canton. I certainly see only too many of them; but no one has to beg; there is work for all. I now tire two horses a day in riding to minister to the sick; I can travel without

danger within a radius of five leagues, and whoever would fire at me now would not be left alive ten minutes. The tacit affection of the inhabitants is all that I have personally gained by these changes, in addition to the pleasure of hearing said to me by everybody, with a joyous air, as I pass by: 'Good-day, Monsieur Benassis!' You will readily comprehend that the fortune gained involuntarily by my model farms is, in my hands, a means and not a result."

"If everyone imitated your example everywhere, monsieur, France would be, indeed, great, and could defy all Europe!" exclaimed Genestas, in a transport.

"But I have kept you here a half-hour," said Benassis; "it is almost dark; let us go to dinner."

From the side of the garden the doctor's house presents a façade with five windows on each story. It consists of a ground-floor surmounted by a first story, and covered with a tile roof pierced by projecting dormer windows. The shutters, painted in green, assert themselves on the grayish tone of the wall, on which for ornament a vine grows between the two stories, from one end to the other, in the form of a frieze. At the bottom, along the wall, some Bengal roses grow sadly, half drowned by the rain-water from the roof, which has no gutters. On entering by the large landing-place which forms the antechamber, there is found at the right a salon with four windows, opening some of them on the court, the others on the garden. This salon, doubtless the object of many economies and many hopes on the part of the poor

deceased proprietor, is floored with planks, wainscoted in the lower part of the walls and furnished with tapestries of the century before the last. The large and wide easy-chairs covered with flowered lampas, the antique gilded branched candlesticks which ornament the chimney-piece, and the curtains with heavy tassels, announced the opulence of the late curé. Benassis had completed this furnishing, which did not want for character, by two consoles of wood with sculptured garlands, placed opposite each other in the space between the windows, and by a timepiece in tortoise-shell incrusted with brass which decorated the chimney. The doctor rarely inhabited this room, which exhaled the damp odor of apartments which are always closed. There was in it still the smell of the defunct curé, the peculiar scent of his tobacco even seemed to issue from the corner of the chimney in which he habitually sat. The two large armchairs were placed symmetrically on each side of the hearth, in which there had been no fire since Monsieur Gravier's visit, but in which were now burning the clear flames of pine wood.

"It is still cold in the evening," said Benassis, "the fire is very agreeable."

Genestas, become thoughtful, was beginning to understand the indifference of the doctor to the ordinary things of life.

"Monsieur," he said to him, "you have, indeed, the spirit of a good citizen, and I am surprised that, after having accomplished so many things, you have not attempted to enlighten the government."

Benassis commenced to laugh, but softly and with a melancholy air.

"Write some memorial upon the methods of civilizing France, is not that it? Monsieur Gravier said that to me, before you. Alas! a government is not to be enlightened, and, of all governments, that the least susceptible of being enlightened is that one which believes that it diffuses illumination. Doubtless, that which we have done for this canton all mayors should do for theirs, the municipal magistrate for his city, the sub-prefect for the arrondissement, the prefect for the department, the minister for France, each one in the sphere of interest in which he acts. Where I have succeeded in constructing a road of two leagues, one would complete a highway, another a canal; where I have encouraged the manufacture of peasants' hats, the minister would relieve France of the industrial yoke of the foreigner by encouraging some manufacture of clocks, by aiding in the perfecting of our iron, our steel, our files, or our crucibles, in cultivating silk-worms, or plants for dyes. In the matter of commerce, encouragement does not signify protection. The enlightened policy of a country should tend to enfranchise it from all tribute to foreign nations, but without the mortifying assistance of customs and prohibitory duties. Industry can only be saved by itself, competition is its life. Protected, it is lulled to sleep; it perishes by monopoly, as under the tariff. The nation that renders all others its tributaries will be that one which will proclaim commercial liberty; it will be conscious of

its own power to maintain its manufactured products at a lower price than that of its competitors.

"France can attain this end much better than England, for she alone possesses a territory sufficiently extended to maintain the agricultural productions at prices which will make possible the lowering of the wages of industry,—to this should be directed the aim of the administration in France, for this is the whole modern question. My dear monsieur, this study has not been the aim of my life; the task which I have tardily taken up is an accidental one. Then, these things are too simple for anyone to constitute a science of them; they have nothing brilliant or theoretical about them, they have the misfortune to be merely useful. In short, labor cannot be hurried.

"In order to obtain success in this, it is necessary to find in yourself every morning the same allowance of courage, the rarest and, apparently, the easiest courage,—that of the professor repeating ceaselessly the same things, a courage that is but slightly recompensed. If we salute respectfully the man who, like yourself, has shed his blood on the field of battle, we deride him who has consumed slowly the fire of his life in repeating the same things to children of the same age. Good done in an obscure manner tempts no one. We are essentially lacking in the civic virtue with which the great men of antiquity rendered service to the country, by placing themselves in the last rank when they were not commanding. The malady of our times is superiority.

There are more saints than niches. For this reason. With the monarchy, we lost *honor;* with the religion of our fathers, *Christian virtue;* with our fruitless essays at government, *patriotism.* Instead of animating the masses, these principles no longer exist but partially, for ideas never perish.

"At present, to prop up society, we have no other support than *egotism.* Individuals believe only in themselves. The future, it is man in human society; we see nothing beyond. The great man who will save us from the shipwreck toward which we are hastening will doubtless avail himself of the spirit of individualism to remake the nation; but, while waiting for this regeneration, we are still in the age of material and positive interests. This last phrase is that which applies to all the world. We are all reckoned, not according to our value, but according to what we weigh. If he is in his shirt-sleeves, the man of energy is scarcely noticed. This sentiment has passed into the government. The minister sends a pitiful medal to the sailor who has saved, at the peril of his life, a dozen men; he gives the cross of honor to the deputy who sells him his vote. Woe to the country thus constituted! Nations, like individuals, owe their energy only to great sentiments. The sentiments of a people are its beliefs. Instead of having beliefs, we have interests. If each one believes only in himself and has faith only in himself, how can you expect to find much civil courage, when the essential condition of this virtue consists in self-renunciation? Civil courage and military

courage spring from the same principle. You are called upon to give your life at once, ours goes from us drop by drop. On each side are the same combats under other forms. It is not sufficient to be a worthy man to civilize the most humble corner of the earth; it is necessary, in addition, to be well informed; moreover, education, probity, patriotism, are nothing without the firm will which enables a man to detach himself from all personal interests in order to devote himself to a social idea.

"Certainly, France counts more than one well-informed man, more than one patriot to each commune; but I am certain that there does not exist in each canton a man who, to these precious qualities, joins the continuous determination, the pertinacity of the blacksmith hammering his iron. The man who destroys and the man who constructs are two phenomena of will,—one prepares, the other completes the work; the first appears like the genius of evil, and the second seems to be the genius of good; one has glory, and the other, forgetfulness. Evil possesses a clamorous voice which awakens the commonplace souls and fills them with admiration, whilst the good is long silent. Human self-love promptly selected the most brilliant rôle. A great work of peace, accomplished without considerations for self, will never, then, be anything but accidental until education has changed the social customs in France. When these customs shall be changed, when we shall all be great citizens, shall we not become, notwithstanding the comforts of a trivial

life, the most wearisome people, the most wearied, the least artistic, the most unhappy, that there is on the earth? These great questions are not for me to decide: I am not the head of the government.

"Apart from these considerations, there are still other difficulties which oppose the adoption of fixed principles by the administration. In questions of civilization, monsieur, nothing is absolute. Ideas which are appropriate to one country are fatal in another, and it is with intelligences as it is with soils. If we have so many bad administrators, it is because government, like taste, proceeds originally from a very elevated and very pure sentiment. In this, genius comes from a tendency of the soul, and not from a science. No one can appreciate either the acts or the ideas of an administrator, his true judges are far from him, the results more distant still. Everyone can thus, without danger, proclaim himself an administrator. In France, the species of seduction which the intelligence exercises over us inspires in us a great esteem for the men with ideas; but ideas are but of small importance where only a will is required. In short, administration does not consist in imposing on the masses ideas or methods more or less just, but in imparting to the good or bad ideas of these masses a useful direction which will bring them into accord with the general welfare. If the prejudices and the fixed habits of a country lead to an evil termination, the inhabitants will themselves abandon their errors. Does not every error in rural economy, political or domestic, entail losses

which self-interest will in the end rectify? Here, very fortunately, I found a blank page. In accordance with my advice, the land here is well cultivated; but there was no system in agriculture, and the soil was good,—it was therefore easy for me to introduce the cultivation of land in five successive rotations of crops, artificial meadows, and potatoes. My agricultural system offended no prejudice. There was as yet no use of bad coulters, as in certain parts of France, and the hoe sufficed for the little cultivation that was done. The wheelwright was interested in praising my wheel-ploughs to benefit his trade; I had in him a cordial ally. But here, as elsewhere, I have always endeavored to make the interests of one converge toward those of others. Then I proceeded from the productions which directly interested these poor people to those which augmented their welfare. I brought nothing in from outside, I only aided those exportations which should enrich them, and the benefits of which are directly comprehended. These people were my disciples by their works and without knowing it.

"Another consideration! We are here only five leagues from Grenoble, and there are always to be found near a great city many outlets for productions. It is not every commune that is at the gates of a great city. In every affair of this nature, it is necessary to consult the spirit of the country, its situation, its resources, to study the land, the men, and the things, and not undertake to plant vines in Normandy.

Therefore, nothing is more variable than the administration: it has very few general principles. The law is uniform, the customs, the soils, the intelligences are not; now, administration is the art of applying the laws without offending the interests, everything therein is then local. On the other side of the mountain at the foot of which lies our abandoned village, it is impossible to plough with wheel-ploughs, the soil has not depth enough; well, if the mayor of that commune had wished to imitate our methods, he would have ruined his people; I advised him to plant vineyards; and, last year, this little district had an excellent vintage, it exchanges its wine for our grain. In short, I had some credit with those to whom I preach; we were constantly in accord. I cured my peasants of their maladies so easy to cure; there is never a question, in fact, of anything more difficult than building up their strength by nourishing food. Whether through economy or through poverty, the country people nourish themselves so inefficiently that their illnesses come only from their indigence, and generally their health is very fair.

"When I had decided religiously upon this life of obscure resignation, I hesitated a long time whether to make myself a curé, a country doctor, or a justice of the peace. It is not without reason, my dear monsieur, that they are proverbially classed together, the three black robes: the priest, the man of law, and the physician,—one heals the wounds of the soul, the second those of the purse, the third those of the body; they represent society in its three principal terms of

existence,—conscience, property, health. Formerly the first, later the second, composed the whole State. Those who have preceded us upon the earth thought, perhaps with reason, that the priest, the guide of ideas, should be the whole government,—he was then king, pontiff, and judge; but everything was then belief and conscience. To-day, everything is changed; let us take our epoch such as it is. Well, I believe that the progress of civilization and the welfare of the masses depend upon these three men; they are the three powers which immediately impress upon the people the action of facts, of interests, and of principles, the three great results produced in a nation by events, by property and by ideas.

"Time progresses and brings changes, property augments or diminishes, everything must be regulated according to these divers mutations,—thence come the principles of order. In order to civilize, to create productions, the masses must be made to comprehend in what the individual interest is in accord with the national interests, which resolve themselves into facts, interests, and principles. These three professions, necessarily in touch with these human results, have thus seemed to me to be obliged to be to-day the greatest levers of civilization; they alone can constantly offer to a man of position efficacious means of ameliorating the condition of the poorer classes, with which they are in constant relation. But the peasant listens more willingly to the man who prescribes for him a remedy that will save his body than to the priest who discourses upon

the salvation of the soul,—one can talk to him of the earth which he cultivates, the other is obliged to communicate with him concerning Heaven, of which, to-day, unfortunately, he thinks very little; I say unfortunately, for the dogma of the life to come is not only a consolation, but, still more, an instrument adapted to govern with. Is not religion the sole power which sanctions social laws? We have recently vindicated God. In the absence of religion, the government was obliged to invent the Terror to render its laws executive; but that was a human terror; it has passed away.

"Well, monsieur, when a peasant is sick, nailed to his couch, or convalescent, he is obliged to listen to consecutive reasons, and he comprehends them better when they are clearly presented to him. It was this reflection which made me a doctor. I reckoned with my peasants, for them; I gave them only advice of a certain effect which constrains them to recognize the justness of my views. With the people, it is necessary to be always infallible. Infallibility made Napoléon; it would have made of him a god, if the universe had not heard him fall at Waterloo. If Mahomet created a religion, after having conquered a third of the globe, it was by concealing from the world the spectacle of his death. For the mayor of a village and the conqueror, the same principles,—the nation and the commune are in the same troop. The masses are everywhere the same. Finally, I showed myself to be rigorous with those to whom I opened my purse. Had it not been for this

firmness, everyone would have mocked at me. The peasants, as well as people of the world, end by having a contempt for the man whom they deceive. To be duped, is not that to have committed an act of weakness? strength alone governs.

"I have never asked a denier of anyone for my services excepting of those who are known to be wealthy; but I have left no one ignorant of their proper value. I do not give my medicines gratuitously, except when the patient is indigent. If my peasants do not pay me, they know their debts; sometimes they appease their consciences by bringing me oats for my horses, wheat when it is not dear. But should the miller offer me eels only for the payment of my services, I would say to him that he was too generous for so little; my politeness bears fruit,—in the winter I will obtain from him some sacks of flour for the poor. Yes, monsieur, these people have a heart when it is not spoiled. To-day, I think more good of them and less evil than in the past."

"You have given yourself a great deal of care!" said Genestas.

"I? not at all," replied Benassis. "It has not cost me any more to say something useful than to utter nonsense. In going among them, in talking, in laughing, I spoke to them of themselves. At first, these people would not listen to me, I had a great deal of repugnance to overcome in them,—I was a bourgeois, and for them a bourgeois is an enemy. This contest amused me. Between doing good and doing evil there exists no other difference than that

between the peace of your conscience and its trouble; the effort is the same. If the scamps were willing to behave themselves, they would be millionaires, instead of being hanged, that is all."

"Monsieur," exclaimed Jacquotte, entering, "the dinner is getting cold!"

"Monsieur," said Genestas, arresting the doctor by the arm, "I have only one observation to offer you on that which I have just heard. I have no knowledge of the wars of Mahomet, so that I cannot judge of his military talents; but if you had seen the Emperor manœuvering during the campaign of France, you would have readily taken him for a god; and if he were vanquished at Waterloo, it was that he was more than a man: he weighed too much upon the earth, and the earth turned under him, that was it! I am, moreover, perfectly of your opinion in every other respect, and, *tonnerre de Dieu!* the woman who bore you did not lose her time."

"Come," said Benassis, smiling, "let us go to dinner."

The dining-room was entirely panelled and painted in gray. The furniture at that time consisted of some straw chairs, a buffet, closets, a stove, and the famous clock of the late curé, and white curtains at the windows. The table, furnished with white linen, had on it nothing suggestive of luxury. The dishes were of earthenware. The soup, made after a recipe of the late curé, was the most substantial bouillon that ever a cook had boiled down.

Hardly had the doctor and his host finished their soup when a man came hastily into the kitchen and, in spite of Jacquotte, made a sudden irruption into the dining-room.

"Well, what is it?" asked the doctor.

"It is, monsieur, that our good woman, Madame Vigneau, has turned all white, so white that it frightens us all!"

"Well!" exclaimed Benassis, cheerfully, "I must leave the table."

He rose. In spite of the doctor's entreaty, Genestas swore in military fashion, throwing down his napkin, that he would not remain at the table without his host, and, in fact, returned to warm himself in the salon, reflecting on the miseries which are inevitably to be encountered in every condition to which man is here below subjected.

Benassis presently returned, and the two future friends returned to the table.

"Taboureau came just now to speak to you," said Jacquotte to her master, bringing in the plates which she had kept warm.

"Who is sick in his house?" he asked.

"No one, monsieur; he wishes to consult you for himself, according to what he said, and will return."

"It is well. This Taboureau," returned Benassis, addressing Genestas, "is for me a whole treatise on philosophy; watch him attentively when he comes, certainly he will amuse you. He was a laboring man, a worthy man, economical, eating little and

working much. As soon as the rogue had secured a few crowns for himself, his intelligence developed; he followed the movement which I had communicated to this poor canton, seeking to profit by it to enrich himself. In eight years he has made a large fortune, large for this canton. He has perhaps at present some forty thousand francs. But I will give you one chance in a thousand to guess by what means he has been able to acquire this sum. He is a usurer, so thorough-going a usurer, and a usurer by a combination so well-founded upon the interests of all the inhabitants of the canton, that I should lose my time if I undertook to disabuse them concerning the advantages which they believe they draw from their relations with Taboureau. When this devil of a man saw everybody cultivating his land, he went about the neighborhood to purchase grain to furnish the poor with the seed which it would be necessary for them to have. Here, as everywhere, the peasants, and even some farmers, have not enough money to pay for their seed. To some of them, Master Taboureau lent a sack of barley for which they returned to him a sack of rye after the harvest; to others, a *setier*—about twelve bushels—of grain for a sack of flour. To-day, my man has extended this singular species of commerce throughout the department. If nothing stops him on the way, he will gain, perhaps, a million.

"Well, my dear monsieur, the workman Taboureau, an honest fellow, obliging, good-natured, would give a helping hand to whoever asked him; but, in

proportion to his gains, Monsieur Taboureau has become litigious, tricky, contemptuous. The richer he becomes, the worse he gets. As soon as the peasant passes from his purely laborious life to a comfortable living or to landed possession, he becomes insupportable. There exists a class, half virtuous, half vicious, half learned, half ignorant, which will always be the despair of governments. You will see a little of the spirit of this class in Taboureau; a man simple in appearance, ignorant even, but certainly deep when his own interests are concerned."

The sound of a heavy step announced the arrival of the lender of grain.

"Come in, Taboureau," exclaimed Benassis.

Thus forewarned by the physician, the commandant examined the peasant and saw in Taboureau a thin man, much stooped, with a round forehead, very much wrinkled. This hollow countenance seemed pierced by two little gray eyes spotted with black. The usurer had a tight mouth, and his thin chin had a tendency to meet his nose ironically hooked. His prominent cheeks presented those diverging lines which denote a wandering life and the cunning of a dealer. His hair was already turning gray. He wore a blue vest, sufficiently clean, the square pockets of which flapped on his thighs, and the open skirts allowed to be seen a white, flowered waistcoat. He stood planted upon his legs, leaning upon a stick with a knobbed end. A little spaniel followed the grain merchant into the room in spite of Jacquotte, and lay down near him.

"Well, what is it?" asked Benassis.

Taboureau looked with a distrustful air at the unknown person seated at the table with the doctor, and said:

"It is not a case of sickness, monsieur le maire; but you know how to heal the injuries of the purse as well as those of the body, and I come to consult you about a little difficulty that we are having with a man of Saint-Laurent."

"Why do you not go to see monsieur the justice of the peace, or his clerk?"

"Eh! it is because monsieur is much more skilful, and I should be more sure of winning my case if I could have his approbation."

"My dear Taboureau, I give willingly my medical consultations gratuitously to the poor, but I cannot examine for nothing the lawsuit of a man as rich as you are. Knowledge costs dearly to acquire."

Taboureau began to twist his hat in his hand.

"If you want my advice, as it will save you the big sous which you would be forced to count out to the lawyers in Grenoble, you will send a bag of rye to the woman Martin, she who brings up the hospital children."

"*Dame!* monsieur, I will do that willingly, if it seems to you necessary. Can I relate my business without disturbing monsieur?" he added, indicating Genestas. "Well, then, monsieur," he went on, at a nod of the head from the doctor, "a man of Saint-Laurent, two months ago from now, then came to see me. 'Taboureau,' he said to me, 'could you sell me

a hundred and thirty-seven *setiers* of barley—about 1644 bushels?' 'Why not?' I said to him; 'that is my trade. Do you want them right away?' 'No,' he said to me; 'at the beginning of spring, for March.' 'Good!' Then he disputed about the price, and, over our wine, we agreed that he should pay me for them at the price of barley at the last market at Grenoble, and that I should deliver them to him in March, deducting the loss in storage; that was understood. But, my dear monsieur, the barley goes up, up; there was my barley boiling up like a milk-soup. I, pressed for money, sell my barley. That was very natural, was it not, monsieur?"

"No," said Benassis, "your barley no longer belonged to you; you were only holding it for another. And, if barley had fallen, would you not have compelled your purchaser to take it at the price agreed upon?"

"But, monsieur, he would not perhaps have paid me, that man. When you go to war, carry on war! The merchant should profit by his gains when they come to him. After all, a merchandise only belongs to you when you have paid for it; is not that true, monsieur l'officier? for it can readily be seen that monsieur has served in the army."

"Taboureau," said Benassis, gravely, "misfortune will come to you. God punishes evil actions sooner or later. How can a man as capable, as well-informed as you are, a man who carries on his business in an honorable manner, set such an example of dishonesty in this canton? If you support such practices,

how can you expect that the poor folks will remain honest, and not steal from you? Your workmen will rob you of a part of the time which they owe to you, and everyone here will become demoralized. You are wrong. Your barley is accounted as delivered. If it had been carried away by the man of Saint-Laurent, you would not have taken it back from him; you have therefore disposed of a thing which no longer belonged to you, your barley was already converted into current money, according to your bargain.—But go on."

Genestas threw at the doctor a glance of intelligence to call his attention to the immobility of Taboureau. Not a muscle of the countenance of the usurer had moved during this rebuke, his forehead had not reddened, his little eyes remained calm.

"Well, monsieur, I am summoned to furnish the barley at the price of this winter; but I hold that I do not owe it."

"Listen, Taboureau, deliver your barley quickly, or no longer count upon the esteem of anyone. Even if you gained such a suit as this you would be considered a man without faith or law, who did not keep his word, without honor—"

"Go on, do not be afraid, tell me I am a cheat, a beggar, a thief. Such things are said in business, monsieur the mayor, without offending anyone. In business, you see, everyone for himself."

"Well, why do you voluntarily place yourself in the position of meriting such terms?"

"But, monsieur, if the law is on my side—"

"But the law is not at all on your side."

"Are you sure of that, monsieur, sure, sure? for, you see, it is an important affair."

"Certainly I am sure of it. If I were not at table, I would make you read the Code. But if the suit is tried, you will lose it, and you will never set your foot in my house again. I do not wish to receive people for whom I have no respect. Understand, you will lose your case."

"Ah! not at all, monsieur, I shall not lose it at all," said Taboureau. "Do you see, monsieur the mayor, it is the man of Saint-Laurent who owes me the barley; it is I who bought it of him, and it is he who refuses to deliver it to me. I wanted to be very certain that I should win before I went to see the sheriff and engaged myself in expenses."

Genestas and the doctor looked at each other, concealing their surprise at the ingenious plan evolved by this man to ascertain the truth concerning this judicial case.

"Well, Taboureau, your man is untrustworthy, and it is not necessary to make bargains with such people."

"Ah! monsieur, those people understand business."

"Good-night, Taboureau."

"Your servant, monsieur the mayor and the company."

"Well," said Benassis, when the usurer had departed, "do you not think that at Paris that man would soon be a millionaire?"

When the dinner was ended, the doctor and his lodger returned to the salon, where they conversed during the rest of the evening, while waiting for bedtime, on war and politics, a conversation during which Genestas manifested the most violent antipathy to the English.

"Monsieur," said the doctor, "may I know whom I have the honor of having for guest?"

"My name is Pierre Bluteau," replied Genestas, "and I am a captain at Grenoble."

"Very good, monsieur. Will you follow the régime that Monsieur Gravier did? In the morning, after déjeuner, he was interested in accompanying me in my rounds in the neighborhood. It is not altogether certain that you will take pleasure in the things with which I am occupied, they are so commonplace. After all, you are neither a proprietor nor mayor of the village, and you will see in the canton nothing that you have not seen elsewhere. All the thatched cottages resemble each other; but, however, you will get the fresh air and you will give some object to your ride."

"Nothing can give me more pleasure than this proposition, and I did not venture to make it to you, for fear of incommoding you."

The commandant, Genestas, whose name we will preserve, notwithstanding his feigned pseudonym, was conducted by his host to a chamber situated on the first floor above the salon.

"Good," said Benassis, "Jacquotte has made a fire for you. If you need anything, you will find a bell-pull at the side of your bed."

"I do not think that there can be the least thing lacking," exclaimed Genestas. "Here is even a boot-jack. It is necessary to be an old trooper to know the value of that piece of furniture! In war, monsieur, it happens more than once that you would be willing to burn a house down to get a beast of a boot-jack.—After a number of marches, and especially after an action, it sometimes happens that the feet, swollen in the wet leather, will yield to no effort; I have gone to sleep more than once in my boots. When one is alone, the misfortune is, however, supportable."

The commandant winked, to give to these last words a sort of artful profundity; then he began to look about him, not without surprise, at a chamber in which everything was commodious, clean, and almost rich.

"What luxury!" said he. "You must be marvellously well lodged?"

"Come and see," said the doctor; "I am your neighbor, we are separated only by the stairway."

Genestas was sufficiently surprised to perceive on entering the physician's room a bare chamber, the walls of which were ornamented only by an old yellowish paper with brown rosettes, and discolored in places. The bedstead, of iron, coarsely varnished, which had over it a wooden rod from which fell two curtains of gray calico, and at its foot a wretched narrow carpet, worn threadbare, resembled a bed in a hospital. At the side of the bed was one of those night-tables with four feet, the rolling

front of which opens and shuts, making a noise like castanets. Three chairs, two armchairs in straw, a chest of drawers in walnut, on which was a basin and a very ancient water-pot, the cover of which was secured by leaden hinges, completed this furnishing. The chimney-hearth was cold, and all the articles necessary for shaving were displayed on the painted stone of the mantel, before an old mirror hung on the wall by a bit of cord. The tiled floor, cleanly swept, was worn in several places, broken and sunk. Curtains of gray calico bordered with green fringes ornamented the two windows. Everything, even to the round table, on which were strewn some papers, an inkstand, and some pens, everything in this simple picture, on which the extreme cleanliness maintained by Jacquotte stamped a sort of correctness, gave the idea of a life almost monastic, indifferent to things and full of sentiments. An open door allowed the commandant to see into a cabinet, in which the doctor doubtless occupied himself very little. This apartment was in a condition nearly similar to that of the bed-chamber. A few dusty books lay scattered upon the dusty boards, and the shelves filled with labelled bottles indicated that pharmacy there occupied more space than science.

"You are going to ask me why this difference between your chamber and mine?" said Benassis. "Listen. I have always been ashamed of those who lodge their guests under the roof, and give them those mirrors which disfigure you to such a degree

that, in looking in them, you think yourself either smaller or larger than life, or ill, or struck with apoplexy. Should we not endeavor to make our friends find their temporary apartment the most agreeable one possible? Hospitality seems to me at once a virtue, a happiness, and a luxury; but, under whatever aspect you consider it, not excepting the case in which it is a mercantile speculation, is it not necessary to display for your guest and for your friend all the cajoleries, all the blandishments of life?

"In your room, then, are the handsome furniture, the warm carpet, the draperies, the clock, the candlesticks, and the night light; the wax candle is for you, for you all the cares of Jacquotte, who has doubtless brought for you new slippers, milk, and her warming-pan. I hope that you will never have been more comfortably seated than you will be in the soft armchair, the discovery of which was made by the defunct curé, I do not know where; but it is true that in everything, in order to find patterns of the good, the handsome, the commodious, we must have recourse to the Church. In short, I hope that in your chamber everything will please you. You will find there good razors, excellent soap, and all those little accessories which make home life such a pleasant thing. But, my dear Monsieur Bluteau, though my opinions concerning hospitality do not fully explain the difference between our two apartments, you will doubtless understand remarkably well the bareness of my chamber and the disorder of

my cabinet when to-morrow you will witness the comings and the goings which take place in my house. In the first place, my life is not an indoors one, I am always abroad. If I remain at home, the peasants are coming to see me at every moment; I belong to them, body, soul, and bed-chamber. Can I give myself all the cares of etiquette and those caused by the inevitable damages which would be inflicted upon my property involuntarily by these worthy people? Luxury is suitable only in hotels, in châteaux, in boudoirs, and in the chambers of friends. Finally, I am hardly ever here but to sleep; of what use, then, to me are the furnishings of wealth? Moreover, you do not know how indifferent to me is everything here below!"

They wished each other a friendly good-night, grasping each other's hands cordially, and they went to bed. The commandant did not fall asleep till he had reflected long upon this man who, from hour to hour, constantly increased in his esteem.

II

ACROSS THE COUNTRY

The friendship which every horseman feels for his steed drew Genestas in the morning to the stable, and he was satisfied with the care taken of his horse by Nicolle.

"Already up, Commandant Bluteau?" exclaimed Benassis, coming to meet his guest. "You are indeed a soldier, you hear the morning gun everywhere, even in town!"

"Is everything well?" Genestas replied, offering him his hand with a friendly gesture.

"I am never positively well," replied Benassis, in a tone half sad and half cheerful.

"Has monsieur slept well?" said Jacquotte to Genestas.

"*Parbleu! ma belle*, you made the bed as if it were for a bride."

Jacquotte, smiling, followed her master and the military man. After seeing them seated at table:

"He is a good fellow, all the same, monsieur l'officier," she said to Nicolle.

"I think so indeed, he has already given me forty sous!"

"We will begin by going to visit two dead people," said Benassis to his guest as they left the dining-room. "Although the physicians rarely wish to find themselves face to face with their so-called victims, I will take you to two houses in which you can make a sufficiently curious observation of human nature. You will there see two scenes which will prove to you how much the mountaineers differ from the inhabitants of the plain in the expression of their feelings. That part of our canton which is situated upon the high peaks preserves customs tinged with an antique color and which recall vaguely scenes from the Bible. There is, upon the chain of our mountains, a line traced by nature on each side of which everything is different in aspect,—above it, strength; below it, dexterity; above, lofty sentiments; below, a perpetual concern for the interests of material life. With the exception of the valley of Ajou, of which the northern slope is peopled by imbeciles and the southern by intelligent people, two populations which, separated only by a stream, are dissimilar in every respect, stature, carriage, physiognomy, manners, occupation, I have nowhere seen this difference more marked than it is here. This fact should oblige the administrators of a country to undertake very serious studies relative to the application of the laws to the masses.—But the horses are ready; let us go!"

The two horsemen presently arrived at a habitation situated in that part of the district which faced the mountains of the Grande-Chartreuse. At the door

of this house, which appeared to be sufficiently neat, they perceived a coffin covered by a black cloth, placed upon two chairs, surrounded by four candles; upon a stool was a copper platter, in which a sprig of boxwood was steeping in the holy water. Each passer-by entered the court, went and kneeled before the body, said a *Pater,* and sprinkled a few drops of holy water upon the bier. Above the black cloth rose the green bunches of a jessamine planted by the side of the door, and over the impost ran the tortuous branches of a vine already in leaf. A young girl was finishing sweeping before the house, obeying that vague necessity of making things presentable which all ceremonies, even the saddest of all, make felt. The eldest son of the dead man, a young peasant of twenty-two, was standing motionless, leaning against the side of the door. There were in his eyes tears which welled up without falling, or which, perhaps, at moments he endeavored to dry unperceived. At the moment when Benassis and Genestas entered the court, after having fastened their horses to one of the poplars growing along a little wall breast-high, over which they had surveyed this scene, the widow came out of her stable, accompanied by a woman who carried a pot full of milk.

"Take courage, my poor Pelletier," said the latter.

"Ah! my dear woman, when one has lived twenty-five years with a man, it is very hard to separate from him!"

And her eyes filled with tears.

"Will you pay the two sous?" she added, after a pause, extending her hand to her neighbor.

"Ah! to be sure, I forgot," said the other woman, offering her her coin. "Come, now, console yourself, neighbor.—Ah! here is Monsieur Benassis."

"Well, my poor mother, are you getting on better?" asked the doctor.

"*Dame!* my dear monsieur," she replied, weeping, "it is necessary to keep about, all the same. I say to myself that my man will suffer no more. He suffered so much!—But come in, messieurs. Jacques, give these messieurs some chairs. Come, now, move yourself. *Pardi!* you will not bring your poor father to life, if you should stay there a hundred years! And now, you will have to work for two."

"No, no, my good woman, leave your son where he is; we will not sit down. You have there a lad who will take care of you, and who is quite capable of taking his father's place."

"Go then and dress yourself, Jacques," exclaimed the widow, "they are coming to get it."

"Well, then, adieu, mother," said Benassis.

"Messieurs, your servant."

"You see," said the physician, "here death is accepted as a foreseen accident which does not interfere with the family course of life, and mourning even is not worn. In the villages no one wishes to go to this expense, whether through poverty or through economy. In the country-places the wearing of mourning, then, does not exist. Now, monsieur, mourning

is neither a custom nor a law; it is something much better, it is an institution which is related to all those laws the observance of which depends upon the same principle, morality.

"Well, notwithstanding our efforts, neither Monsieur Janvier nor I have been able to make our peasants comprehend the great importance of public demonstrations for the maintenance of the social order. These honest people, emancipated yesterday, are not yet prepared to appreciate the new relations which should connect them with these general ideas; as yet, they have gotten as far only as those ideas which lead to order and physical well-being; later, if some one continue my work, they will arrive at the principles which serve to preserve the public rights. In fact, it is not sufficient to be an honest man, it is necessary to seem so. Society does not exist alone through ideas of morality; in order to maintain itself, it has need of actions in harmony with these ideas.

"In the greater number of the rural communities, among a hundred families which death has deprived of their head, only a few individuals, endowed with a quick sensibility, will keep this dead man long in remembrance; but all the others will have completely forgotten him in the course of the year. Is not this forgetfulness a great misfortune? A religion is the heart of a people, it expresses their feelings and enlarges them in giving them an object; but, without a God, visibly honored, religion does not exist, and in consequence human laws have no strength. If conscience belongs to God alone, the body falls under

the sway of the social law; now, is it not the beginning of atheism to thus efface the outward signs of a religious sorrow, not to indicate clearly to children who have not yet begun to reflect, and to all those who have need of examples, the necessity of obedience to laws by a visible resignation to the orders of Providence, which afflicts and consoles, which gives and takes away the goods of this world? I admit that, after having passed through days of mocking incredulity, I have here come to comprehend the value of religious ceremonies, those of family solemnities, the importance of the customs and festivals of the family circle. The basis of human societies will always be the family. There begins the action of power and of the law; there, at least, should obedience be learned. The family spirit and the paternal authority, considered in all their relations, are two principles as yet too little developed in our new legislative system. The family, the commune, the department, all our country, however, rests on these. The laws should, therefore, be based upon these three great divisions.

"In my opinion, the marriage of betrothed couples, the birth of children, the death of fathers, cannot be surrounded by too many observances. That which has given Catholicism its strength, that which has so deeply rooted it in manners and customs, is precisely the state with which it appears in the solemn circumstances of life to environ them with a pomp so simply affecting, so grand, when the priest elevates himself to the height of his mission and when he

knows how to bring his office into harmony with the sublimity of Christian morality. Formerly I considered the Catholic religion as a mass of bigotry and of superstition, skilfully manipulated, which an intelligent civilization should reform. Here, I have recognized the political necessity and the moral utility of it; here, I have comprehended the power of it by the very meaning of the word which expresses it. Religion signifies *bond*, and certainly the worship, or, in other words, the religion expressed, constitutes the only force which can bind together the social elements and give them a durable form.

"Here, in short, I have found the balm with which religion soothes the wounds of life; without discussing it, I have felt that it accords admirably with the passionate natures and manners of the southern nations.—Take the road which ascends," said the doctor, interrupting himself; "we must reach the plateau. From there, we will overlook the two valleys, and you will enjoy a beautiful spectacle. At an elevation of about three thousand feet above the Mediterranean, we shall see Savoy and Dauphiny, the mountains of the Lyonnais and the Rhône. We shall be in another commune, a mountainous commune, in which you will see in one of Monsieur Gravier's farms the spectacle of which I have spoken to you, that natural pomp which realizes my ideas concerning the great events of life. In this commune, mourning is worn religiously. The poor solicit contributions in order to be able to purchase for themselves their black garments. In these circumstances,

no one refuses them succor. There are but very few days in which a widow does not speak of her loss, always with weeping; and ten years after her misfortune her feelings are as deep as the day after. There, the manners are patriarchal,—the father's authority is unlimited, his word is law; he eats alone, seated at the upper end of the table; his wife and his children wait on him, those around him do not speak to him without employing certain respectful formulas, before him everyone stands, and uncovered.

"Brought up in this manner, men have the instinct of their grandeur. These customs constitute, in my eyes, a noble education. Thus, in this commune, the inhabitants are generally just, economical, and industrious. It is the custom for each father of a family to divide his property equally among his children when age forbids him to work longer; his children then maintain him. During the last century, an old man of ninety, after having made his division among his four children, went to live three months of the year with each of them. When he left the eldest to go to the youngest, one of his friends asked him: 'Well, are you satisfied?' 'Upon my word, yes,' replied the old man, 'they have treated me as though I were their child.' This speech, monsieur, appeared so remarkable to an officer named Vauvenargues, a celebrated moral philosopher, then in garrison at Grenoble, that he repeated it in several salons in Paris, where this fine phrase was recorded by a writer named Chamfort. Well, there are often spoken

among us words more remarkable than these, but they want historians worthy of hearing them—"

"I have seen the Moravian brethren, the Lollards in Bohemia and Hungary," said Genestas; "they are Christians who bear considerable resemblance to your mountaineers. These brave people endure the evils of war with an angelic patience."

"Monsieur," replied the doctor, "simple manners should be nearly similar in all countries. The true has only one form. In point of fact, life in the country kills many ideas, but it weakens the vices and develops the virtues. In fact, the fewer men there are to be found gathered together upon one point, the fewer crimes there are to be met with, the fewer misdemeanors, evil sentiments. The purity of the air counts for a good deal in the innocence of manners."

The two horsemen, who had been ascending at a walk a stony road, finally arrived on the top of the plateau of which Benassis had spoken. This elevated plain surrounds a very lofty peak, completely bare, which overlooks it, and on which there is no sign of vegetation; the summit is gray, cleft in many places, abrupt and not to be scaled; the fertile land, enclosed by rocks, lies under this peak and surrounds it in an irregular shape to the extent of about a hundred arpents. To the south the eye perceives through an immense opening the French Maurienne, Dauphiny, the rocks of Savoy, and the distant mountains of the Lyonnais. As Genestas turned to contemplate this extended scene, then widely lit up by the spring sunshine, the sound of mournful cries was heard.

"Come," said Benassis to him, "the chanting has begun. Chanting is the name which is given to this part of the funeral ceremonies."

The officer then perceived, on the western slope of the peak, the buildings of a considerable farm which formed a perfect square. The arched entrance, all in granite, has a certain grandeur, which is heightened by the antiquity of this construction, the age of the trees which surround it, and the plants which cling to its angles. The main dwelling is at the back of the court, on each side of which are situated the barns, the sheepfolds, the stables, cattle-stalls, the wagon-houses, and, in the midst, the great pool of water in which the manure is steeping. This courtyard, the aspect of which is usually so animated in the rich and populous farms, was at this moment silent and gloomy. The gate of the poultry-yard was closed, the animals were all shut up in their stables, from which their various sounds could scarcely be heard. The stables, the cow-houses, were all carefully closed. The path which led up to the house had been swept. This perfect order where disorder habitually reigned, this lack of movement and this silence in so noisy a place, the calm of the mountain, the shadow thrown by the summit of the peak, all contributed to affect the mind.

Accustomed as he was to strong impressions, Genestas could not repress a thrill when he saw a dozen men and women in tears, arranged outside the door of the great hall, who were all crying: "The master is dead!" with a frightful sameness of

intonation and twice repeated, during the interval which he occupied in arriving at the door of the farmer's dwelling. When this cry was ended, the sound of mourning was heard from the interior, and the voice of a woman came through the windows.

"I would not venture to intrude into this sorrow," said Genestas to Benassis.

"I always come to visit the families afflicted by death," replied the physician, "partly to see that no accident caused by grief has happened, partly to verify the decease; you can accompany me without any scruples; moreover, the scene is so imposing, and we shall find so many people, that you will not be noticed."

As he followed the doctor, Genestas saw, in fact, that the first room was full of relatives. Both of them passed through this assembly, and placed themselves near the door of a bedroom adjoining the great hall which served as kitchen and general gathering-place for the whole family, it should rather be said, for the colony, for the length of the table indicated the habitual residence of some forty persons. The arrival of Benassis interrupted the discourse of a tall woman, simply clothed, whose hair was thin, and who retained in her own the hand of the dead with a touching movement. The latter, clothed in his best, was extended stiffly upon his bed, the curtains of which had been lifted. This calm countenance, which seemed to breathe of Heaven, and, above all, the white hair, produced a

dramatic effect. On each side of the bed stood the children and the nearest relatives of the two spouses, each line keeping on its own side, the relatives of the wife on the left, those of the deceased on the right. Men and women, they were all kneeling and praying, the greater number were weeping. The bed was surrounded by wax tapers. The curé of the parish and his assistants had their post in the middle of the chamber, around the open coffin. It was a tragic spectacle, to see the head of this family in presence of the coffin which was ready to swallow him up forever.

"Ah! my dear lord," said the widow, pointing to the doctor, "if the science of the best of men has not been able to save thee, it was doubtless written above that thou shouldst precede me into the grave! Yes, see it cold, this hand which has pressed mine with so much friendship! I have lost forever my dear companion, and our household has lost its precious head, for thou wast truly our guide. Alas! all those who weep for thee with me have been well acquainted with the light of thy heart and all the value of thy character, but I, alone, knew how sweet and patient thou wast! Ah! my spouse, my husband, it is then necessary to say adieu to thee, to thee, our support, to thee, my good master! and we, thy children, for thou didst cherish us all equally, we have all lost our father!"

The widow threw herself upon the body, clasped it close, covered it with tears, warmed it with kisses; and, during this pause, the servants cried:

"The master is dead!"

"Yes," resumed the widow, "he is dead, this dear man, dearly-beloved, who gave us our bread, who planted, gathered for us, and watched over our happiness whilst conducting us through life with an authority full of mildness; I can say it now in his praise, he never gave me the slightest grief, he was good, strong, patient; and when we tortured him in order to restore to him his precious health, 'Let me alone, my children, all is in vain!' this dear lamb said to us in the same voice in which he said to us a few days before: 'Everything is going well, my friends!' Yes, O God! a few days sufficed to take from us the joy of this house and to darken our life by closing the eyes of the best of men, of the most upright, of the most venerated, of a man who had not his equal for managing the plough, who traversed fearlessly our mountains night and day, and who, on his return, always smiled on his wife and his children. Ah! he was indeed our love, for all of us! When he was absent, the hearth became sad, we could not eat with good appetite. Oh! what will it be now, when our guardian angel is placed under ground and when we shall never see him more? Never, my friends! never, my good relatives! never, my children! Yes, my children have lost their good father, our relatives have lost their good relation, my friends have lost a good friend, and I, I have lost all, as the house has lost its master!"

She took the hand of the dead man, kneeled down

to better press her face against it, and kissed it. The servants cried three times:

"The master is dead!"

At this moment the eldest son came up to his mother and said to her:

"Mother, here are the people from Saint-Laurent coming, they will want some wine."

"My son," she replied, in a low voice, quitting the solemn and lamentable tone in which she had given expression to her feelings, "take the keys, you are the master within this house; see that they find here the welcome which your father would have given them, and that nothing here seem changed to them.—That I might see thee once more to my comfort, my honorable husband!" she resumed. "But, alas! thou no longer feelest me, I can no longer warm thee again! Ah! all that I could wish would be to console thee still in causing thee to know that, so long as I live, thou wilt dwell in this heart which thou hast gladdened, that I shall be happy in the memory of my happiness, and that thy dear remembrance shall remain in this chamber. Yes, it shall always be full of thee, so long as God leaves me here. Listen to me, my dear husband! I swear to keep thy bed as it now is. I have never entered it without thee, let it then remain empty and cold. In losing thee, I have indeed lost all that makes a woman,—master, spouse, father, friend, companion, man, everything!"

"The master is dead!" cried the servants.

During this cry, which became general, the widow

took the scissors hanging at her girdle and cut off her hair, which she placed in her husband's hand. There was a deep silence.

"That action signifies that she will not marry again," said Benassis. "Many relatives expected this resolution on her part."

"Take it, my dear lord!" she said, with an effusion of voice and of heart which affected everyone; "guard in the tomb the faith which I have sworn to thee. We shall thus be always united, and I shall remain among thy children for love of that lineage which rejoiced thy soul. Oh, that thou couldst hear me, my husband, my only treasure, and learn that thou wilt still make me live, thou dead, to obey thy sacred wishes, and to honor thy memory!"

Benassis pressed the hand of Genestas as an invitation to follow him, and they went out. The outer room was full of people who had come from another commune, also among the mountains; all of them were silent and thoughtful, as if the sorrow and mourning which filled this house had already affected them. As Benassis and the commandant passed the threshold, they overheard these words, said by one of these chance guests to the son of the deceased:

"When did he die?"

"Ah!" exclaimed the eldest son, who was a man of twenty-five, "I did not see him die! He called me, and I was not there!"

His sobs interrupted him, but he continued:

"The evening before, he said to me: 'Son, thou

wilt go to the town to pay our taxes; the ceremony of my funeral will cause it to be forgotten, and we shall be in arrears, which has never yet happened.' He seemed to be better, and I went. During my absence he died without my receiving his last embraces! In his last hour he did not see me by his side, as I had always been."

"The master is dead!" cried the mourners.

"Alas! he is dead, and I have received neither his last look nor his last sigh. And how could we have thought of the taxes? Would it not have been better to have lost all our money rather than to leave the house? Can all our fortune pay for his last adieu? No.—*Mon Dieu*, if thy father is ill, never leave him, Jean; thou wilt give thyself remorse for the rest of thy life."

"My friend," said Genestas to him, "I have seen thousands of men die on battle-fields, and Death did not wait for their children to come to say adieu to them; therefore console yourself, you are not the only one."

"A father, my dear monsieur," he replied, breaking into tears, "a father who was such a good man!"

"This funeral oration," said Benassis, directing Genestas toward the farm buildings, "will be continued until the moment when the body is placed in the coffin, and during all that time the words of this weeping wife will increase in violence and in forcible figures of speech. But, to speak thus before this imposing assembly, it is necessary that a wife should have acquired the right by a spotless life. If the

THE DEATH OF THE MASTER

The latter, clothed in his best, was extended stiffly upon his bed, the curtains of which had been lifted. This calm countenance, which seemed to breathe of Heaven, and, above all, the white hair, produced a dramatic effect.

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widow had the least fault with which to reproach herself, she would not venture to say a single word; otherwise, it would be to condemn herself; to be at once accuser and judge. Is not this custom, which serves to judge the dead and the living, sublime? The mourning will not be assumed till a week later, in general assembly. During this week the relatives will remain with the children and the widow, to aid them in arranging their affairs and to console them. This gathering has a great influence upon the minds; it represses the evil passions by that human respect which takes possession of men when they are in the presence of each other. Finally, on the day when mourning is put on, there takes place a solemn repast, at which all the relatives say adieu. All this is grave, and he who would be found wanting in the duties which are imposed by the death of the head of a family would have no one at his own funeral chant."

At this moment, the doctor, being near the cattle stables, opened the door and caused the commandant to enter that he might see them.

"Look, captain, all our stables have been rebuilt on this model. Is it not superb?"

Genestas could not but admire this vast establishment, in which the cows and the oxen were ranged in two rows, their tails turned toward the lateral walls, and their heads toward the middle of the stable, into which they entered by a sufficiently wide passage running between them and the wall; through their open mangers could be seen their horned heads

and their brilliant eyes. The master could thus readily pass his cattle in review. The fodder, placed overhead among the rafters, where a species of ceiling had been arranged, fell into the racks without trouble or loss. Between the two rows of mangers was a large paved space, clean and well aired.

"During the winter," said Benassis, walking about with Genestas in the middle of the stable, "the evening gatherings and the work take place here in common. Tables are arranged, and everyone thus warms himself economically. The sheepfolds are also built upon this system. You would not believe how readily the animals become accustomed to order; I have often admired them when they came in,—each one of them knows her place, and allows those which should do so to enter first. You see, there is plenty of room between the animal and the wall to allow of their being milked or cared for; then the floor is inclined in such a manner that the liquids drain off easily."

"By this stable you can judge of all the rest," said Genestas; "without wishing to flatter you, these are, indeed, fine results."

"They have not been obtained without trouble," replied Benassis; "but, moreover, what cattle!"

"Certainly, they are magnificent, and you were justified in praising them to me," replied Genestas.

"Now," said the doctor, when he was mounted and had passed through the gate, "we will ride across our new *clearings* and the grain lands, the

little corner of my commune which I have named La Beauce."

For about an hour the two horsemen rode across the fields, on the fine cultivation of which the soldier complimented the physician; then they came out again on the territory of the town by following the slope of the mountain, sometimes talking and sometimes silent, as the pace of their horses permitted them to converse or obliged them to be silent.

"I promised you yesterday," said Benassis to Genestas as they entered a little gorge by which they issued into the great valley, "to show you one of the two soldiers who returned from the army after the fall of Napoléon. If I am not mistaken, we shall find him at a few steps from here, digging out again a sort of natural reservoir in which the streams from the mountain are gathered, and which the earth brought down has filled up. But, to render this man interesting to you, it is necessary to relate to you his life.—His name is Gondrin; he was taken by the great conscription of 1792, at the age of eighteen, and enrolled in the artillery. As a private soldier he made the campaigns of Italy under Napoléon, followed him to Egypt, returned from the east after the Peace of Amiens; then, regimented under the Empire in the pontoon builders of the Guard, he served constantly in Germany. Finally, the poor fellow was sent to Russia."

"We are in some respects brothers," said Genestas; "I have made the same campaigns. It required constitutions of iron to resist the caprices

of so many different climates! Upon my word! the good Lord must have given some patent for living to those who are still on their pins after having traversed Italy, Egypt, Germany, Portugal, and Russia!"

"So you are now going to see a fine stump of a man," replied Benassis. "You know all about the rout, it is useless to repeat it to you. My man was one of the *pontonniers* of the Bérésina; he aided in constructing the bridge over which the army passed, and, in order to place firmly the first trestles, he worked in the water up to his waist. General Eblé, under whose orders were the *pontonniers*, could find only forty-two of them who were hairy enough, as Gondrin says, to undertake this work. Indeed, the general went into the water himself, encouraging them, consoling them, promising to each one a thousand francs of pension and the cross of the Legion. The first man who entered the Bérésina had his leg carried off by a large block of ice, and the man followed his leg. But you will comprehend better the difficulties of the enterprise by the results,—of the forty-two *pontonniers* there remains to-day only Gondrin. Thirty-nine of them perished at the passage of the Bérésina, and the other two ended miserably in the hospitals in Poland. This poor soldier did not return from Wilna till 1814, after the restoration of the Bourbons. General Eblé, of whom Gondrin never speaks without tears in his eyes, was dead. The *pontonnier*, become deaf, infirm, and unable either to read or write, found, therefore, neither support nor defender.

"Having arrived at Paris by begging his bread, he there made application at the offices of the minister of war to obtain, not the thousand francs of pension promised, not the cross of the Legion, but simply the pension from the army to which he was entitled after twenty-two years of service, and I do not know how many campaigns: but he received neither back pay, nor travelling expenses, nor pension. After a year of useless solicitation, during which he had extended his hand to all those whom he had saved, the *pontonnier* returned here in despair, but resigned. This unknown hero digs ditches at ten sous a fathom. Accustomed to working in swamps, he has, as he says, the specialty of tasks which no other workman cares to undertake. By cleaning out pools, by digging ditches in the inundated meadows, he can make about three francs a day. His deafness gives him a melancholy air; he is naturally but little of a talker, but he has a good heart. We are very good friends. He dines with me on the days of the battle of Austerlitz, of the fête of the Emperor, of the disaster of Waterloo, and at dessert I present him with a Napoléon to pay for his wine for three months. The feeling of respect which I have for this man is, moreover, shared by the whole commune, which would not ask for anything better than to take care of him. If he works, it is through pride. In every house that he enters, everyone honors him as I do and asks him to dinner. I have been able to get him to accept my twenty-franc piece only as a portrait of

the Emperor. The injustice with which he has been treated has deeply grieved him, but he regrets the cross even more than he desires his pension. One thing only consoles him. When General Eblé presented the surviving *pontonniers* to the Emperor after the construction of the bridges, Napoléon embraced our poor Gondrin, who, had it not been for that accolade, would have perhaps been dead before this; he lives only through this souvenir and in the hope of Napoléon's return; nothing can convince him of his death, and, persuaded as he is, that his captivity is due to the English, I believe that he would kill under the slightest pretext the best of aldermen travelling for his pleasure."

"Come on, come on!" exclaimed Genestas, rousing himself from the close attention with which he had been listening to the doctor, "let us go more quickly, I wish to see this man."

And the two horsemen put their steeds at a rapid trot.

"The other soldier," resumed Benassis, "is also one of those men of iron who have rolled about in the armies. He has lived, as live all the French soldiers, on balls, on blows, on victories; he has suffered greatly and has never worn any but epaulettes of wool. He has a jovial character, he fanatically loves Napoléon, who gave him the cross on the field of battle of Valontina. A true Dauphinois, he has always taken care of his affairs; so he has his pension of retirement and his Legionary honors. He is an infantry soldier, named Goguelat, who entered

the Guard in 1812. He is, in some sort, Gondrin's housekeeper. Both of them live in the house of the widow of a hawker, to whom they hand their money; the good woman lodges them, feeds them, clothes them, takes care of them as if they were her children. Goguelat is here the carrier of the mail. In this capacity, he is the bearer of news for the canton, and the habit of relating it has made him the orator of the evening gatherings, the official story-teller; therefore Gondrin regards him as a wit, as a keen satirist. When Goguelat speaks of Napoléon, the *pontonnier* seems to divine his words from the mere movement of his lips. If they come this evening to the gathering which takes place in one of my barns, and we can see them without being seen, I will enable you to be a spectator. But here we are in the neighborhood of the ditch, and I do not see my friend, the *pontonnier*."

The doctor and the commandant looked attentively around them; they saw only the shovel, the pick, the wheelbarrow, the military jacket of Gondrin near a pile of black mud, but no sign of the man in the different rocky water-courses, species of capricious hollows, almost all of them shaded by small bushes and trees.

"He cannot be far away.—Ohé! Gondrin!" cried Benassis.

Genestas then perceived the smoke of a pipe among the foliage of a pile of rubbish, and pointed it out to the doctor, who repeated his cry. Presently the old *pontonnier* thrust out his head, recognized the mayor, and descended by a little path.

"Well, my ancient," cried Benassis to him, making a species of speaking-trumpet with the palm of his hand, "here is a comrade, an Egyptian, who has wished to see you."

Gondrin promptly lifted his eyes to Genestas and threw upon him that profound and investigating glance which the old soldiers have learned through being obliged to measure their dangers promptly. When he saw the red ribbon of the commandant, he silently carried the back of his hand to his forehead.

"If the shaven little man were still living," cried the officer to him, "thou wouldst have the cross and a fine pension, for thou savedst the lives of all those who wore epaulettes and who found themselves on the other side of the river on the first of October, 1812; but, my friend," added the commandant, dismounting and taking his hand with a sudden effusion of feeling, "I am not the minister of war."

On hearing these words, the old *pontonnier* straightened himself on his legs after having carefully shaken out the ashes of his pipe and put it in his pocket; then he said, lowering his head:

"I only did my duty, my officer, but the others have not done theirs toward me. They asked me for my papers! 'My papers?' I said to them, 'why, they are the twenty-ninth bulletin!'"

"We must demand again, comrade. With some influence, it is to-day impossible that thou shouldst not obtain justice."

"Justice!" exclaimed the old *pontonnier*, in a tone which thrilled the doctor and the commandant.

THE PONTONNIER OF THE BÉRÉSINA

Genestas then perceived the smoke of a pipe among the foliage of a pile of rubbish, and pointed it out to the doctor, who repeated his cry. Presently the old pontonnier *thrust out his head, recognized the mayor, and descended by a little path.*

THE PONTONNIER OF THE BERESINA

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THE PONTONNIER OF THE BÉRÉSINA

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There was a moment of silence, during which the two horsemen looked at this remnant of those soldiers of bronze whom Napoléon had culled out of three generations. Gondrin was certainly a fine specimen of that indestructible mass which broke without bending. This old man was scarcely five feet tall, his chest and his shoulders were prodigiously developed; his countenance, tanned, furrowed with wrinkles, sunken but muscular, preserved still some traces of martial character. Everything about him betrayed a sort of roughness,—his forehead seemed to be of stone; his hair, scarce and gray, fell in feeble locks as if already life were failing in his fatigued head; his arms, covered with hair, as well as his chest, part of which was exposed by the opening of his coarse shirt, revealed an extraordinary strength. And, finally, he was set upon his almost crooked legs as upon an unshakable base.

"Justice?" he repeated, "there will never be any of that for such as we! We have no summons-servers to demand our just dues. And, as it is necessary to keep the bottle filled," he continued, striking his stomach, "we have not the time to wait. So that, seeing that the word of those who pass their lives in warming themselves in official bureaus has not the worth of vegetables, I have returned here to take my daily living out of the common funds," said he, striking the mud with his shovel.

"My old comrade, things cannot go on in this way!" said Genestas. "I owe my life to you, and I should be an ingrate if I did not give you aid! I

remember passing over the bridges of the Béresina; I know some good fellows who also keep the memory of that always fresh, and they will second me in having you recompensed by the country as you deserve."

"They will call you a Bonapartist! Do not meddle with that, my officer. Moreover, I have fallen to the rear, and I have made my hole here like a spent bullet. Only, I did not expect, after having traversed the desert on camels, and after having drunk a glass of wine at the corner of the fire in Moscow, to die under the trees which my father had planted," he said, as he resumed his work.

"Poor old fellow," said Genestas. "In his place, I would do as he does; we no longer have our father. Monsieur," said he to Benassis, "the resignation of this man makes me very melancholy; he does not know how much he interests me, and he will believe that I am one of those gilded beggars who are insensible to the miseries of the soldier."

He returned abruptly, seized the *pontonnier* by the hand, and cried in his ear:

"By the cross which I wear, and which formerly signified honor, I swear to do all that is humanly possible to undertake to obtain a pension for you, though I have to swallow ten refusals from the minister, to solicit the king, the dauphin, and the whole shop!"

When he heard these words, the old Gondrin shivered, looked at Genestas, and said to him:

"You have, then, been a private soldier?"

The commandant nodded his head. At this sign the *pontonnier* wiped his hand, took that of Genestas, grasped it with a heartfelt pressure, and said to him:

"My general, when I went into the water over there, I gave to the army my life as alms; well, there has been gain, since I am still on my spurs. Wait, now, would you like to know all about it? Well, since *the other* has been turned off, I no longer have any taste for anything. Finally, they have assigned me this place," he added, gayly, indicating the earth, "twenty thousand francs to take, and I am paying myself in detail, as that other said."

"Come, comrade," said Genestas, affected by the sublimity of this pardon, "you will have here at least the only thing which you cannot prevent me from giving you."

The commandant struck his heart, looked at the *pontonnier* a moment, remounted his horse, and continued his ride by the side of Benassis.

"It is such administrative cruelties as this which foment the war of the poor against the rich," said the doctor. "Those to whom power is temporarily confided have never thought seriously of the necessary results of an injustice committed against a man of the people. A poor man, obliged to gain his daily bread, does not contest for long, it is true; but he speaks, and finds an echo in all suffering hearts. A single iniquity is thus multiplied by the number of those who feel themselves injured by it. This leaven ferments. It is nothing as yet; there results

from it a greater evil. These injustices develop in the people a silent hatred for social superiority. The bourgeois becomes and remains the enemy of the poor, who put him outside the law, deceive him and rob him. For the poor, robbery is neither a misdemeanor nor a crime, it is a vengeance. If, when it is a question of rendering justice to the feeble, an administrator illtreats them and filches from them their acquired rights, how can we exact from the unfortunate without bread resignation under their trials, and respect for property?—I shudder in thinking that some clerk in a bureau, whose function it is to dust off the documents, has received the thousand francs of pension promised to Gondrin. And certain individuals, who have never measured the excess of sufferings, accuse the popular vengeances of excess! But on the day when the government causes more individual unhappiness than prosperity, its overthrow depends only upon a chance; in overturning it, the people settle their accounts in their own manner. A statesman should always depict to himself the poor at the feet of Justice; she was invented only for them!"

When they arrived in the precincts of the town, Benassis saw two persons walking in the road, and said to the commandant, who had been riding for some time in deep thought:

"You have seen the resigned poverty of a veteran of the army; now you will see that of an old agriculturist. There is a man who, during the whole of his life, has dug, cultivated, sown, and harvested for others."

Genestas then perceived a poor old man who was walking with an old woman. The man appeared to be suffering from some sciatic trouble, and hobbled along painfully, his feet in wretched sabots. He carried on his shoulder a wallet, in the pouch of which shook about some instruments, the handles of which, blackened by long usage and by sweat, produced a slight rattling; the pouch behind contained his bread, some raw onions, and some nuts. His legs seemed to be warped. His back, bowed by the habits of labor, obliged him to walk stooping, so that, to preserve his equilibrium, he leaned upon a long stick. His hair, white as snow, fell from under a shabby hat, reddened by exposure to the weather, and sewed up with white thread. His garments, of coarse stuff, pieced in a hundred places, presented various contrasts of color. It was a sort of human ruin, in which were lacking none of the characteristics that render ruins so affecting. His wife, a little straighter than he, but likewise covered with rags, wearing a coarse cap, carried on her back a stoneware vase, round and flat, held by a cord passed through the handles. They raised their heads when they heard the sounds of the horses' hoofs, recognized Benassis, and stopped. These two old people, the one disabled by hard labor, the other, his faithful companion, equally decrepit, displayed, both of them, countenances in which the features were effaced by the wrinkles; the skin, blackened by the sun, and hardened by the intemperance of the weather, was pitiful to see. If the history of

their life had not been engraved on their physiognomies, their attitudes would have revealed it. Both of them had toiled unceasingly, and ceaselessly suffered together, having many evils and very few pleasures to share; they appeared to have become accustomed to their ill-fortune, as the prisoner habituates himself to his jail; in them, everything was simplicity. Their faces did not want for a sort of cheerful frankness. On examining them, their monotonous life, the lot of so many poor creatures, seemed to be almost enviable. There were, indeed, to be seen in them traces of sorrow, but none of gloom and discontent.

"Well, my worthy Father Moreau, you are then absolutely determined to work all the time?"

"Yes, Monsieur Benassis. I will clear off for you a brush-land or two yet before I burst up," replied the old man, cheerfully, his little black eyes lighting up.

"Is it wine that your wife is carrying? If you will not take some rest, at least it is necessary to drink some wine."

"To rest myself! That bores me. When I am in the sunlight, occupied in clearing the land, the sun and the air reanimate me. As to the wine, yes, monsieur, that is wine, and I know very well that it was you who caused us to get it for almost nothing from monsieur the mayor of Courteil. Ah! you may be as sly as you please, you are recognized all the same."

"Well, then, good-day, mother. Doubtless you

are going to-day to the piece of ground of Champferlu?"

"Yes, monsieur, it was commenced yesterday evening."

"Good luck to you!" said Benassis. "You should be well content sometimes on seeing that mountain, which you have cleared off almost all yourselves."

"*Dame!* yes, monsieur," replied the old woman, "it is our work! We have well earned the right to eat bread."

"You see," said Benassis to Genestas, "labor, the earth to cultivate, that is the capital of the poor. That goodman would think himself dishonored if he went to the hospital or if he begged; he wishes to die, pick-axe in hand, in the midst of the fields in the sunlight. Upon my word, he has a proud courage. Through constant labor, labor has become his life; but, also, he does not fear death! he is profoundly philosophical without knowing it. This old Father Moreau gave me the idea of founding in this canton a hospital for the tillers, for the workmen, in short, for the country people who, after having worked all their lives, arrive at an honorable and poor old age. Monsieur, I did not reckon upon the fortune which I have made, and which is useless to me personally. But few things are required for the man fallen from the summit of his hopes. The life of the idle is the only one that costs dearly; perhaps it is even a social theft to consume without producing anything. On learning of the discussions which were raised at the time of his fall on the subject of his pension,

Napoléon said that he only needed a horse and a crown a day.

"When I came here, I renounced money. Since, I have recognized that money represents faculties, and becomes necessary in order to do good. I have, then, in my will, left my house to found a hospital in which the unfortunate aged without an asylum, and who may be less proud than Moreau, may pass their last days. Then a certain portion of the nine thousand francs of income which my lands and my mill bring me in will be set aside to give aid at home in the too severe winters to those who are truly needy. This establishment will be under the surveillance of the municipal council, to which the curé will be added as president. In this manner, the fortune which chance has caused me to find in this canton will remain here. The regulations of this institution are all drawn up in my will; it would be wearisome to repeat them to you, it will be sufficient to tell you that I have foreseen everything. I have even created a reserve fund, which should permit the commune some day to furnish several scholarships for those young persons who might give evidences of talent for the arts or the sciences. Thus, even after my death, my work of civilization will continue. You see, Captain Bluteau, when one has commenced a task, there is something in us which urges us on not to leave it imperfect. This need of order and of perfection is one of the most evident indications of a destiny yet to come. But at present let us go more quickly, I must finish my rounds, and I have still five or six patients to see."

After having trotted some time in silence, Benassis said to his companion, laughing:

"Ah, there! Captain Bluteau, you make me chatter like a jay, and you tell me nothing of your life, which must have been remarkable. A soldier of your age has seen too many things not to have more than one adventure to relate?"

"But," replied Genestas, "my life is the life of the army. All military figures resemble each other. Never having commanded, having always remained in the ranks to receive or give sabre-cuts, I have done just like the others. I went where Napoléon conducted us, and I found myself in line in all the battles in which the Imperial Guard was engaged. These are well-known events. To take care of his horses, to suffer sometimes from hunger and thirst, to fight when it is necessary, there is the whole life of a soldier. Is not that as simple as good-day? There are battles which, for us, are entirely summed up in a horse unshod, which has left us in an awkward position. In short, I have seen so many countries that I have become accustomed to seeing them, and I have seen so many dead men that I have ended by counting my own life as nothing."

"However, you must have been personally in danger during certain moments, and these particular individual dangers would be interesting, related by you?"

"Perhaps," replied the commandant.

"Well, tell me what has most moved you. Do not be afraid; go ahead! I will not believe that you

are wanting in modesty even when you relate to me some trait of heroism. When a man is quite certain of being comprehended by those in whom he confides, should he not experience a sort of pleasure in saying: 'I did that'?"

"Well, I will relate to you an incident that sometimes causes me remorse. During the fifteen years in which we fought, it did not happen to me to kill a man in a single case, excepting in the way of legitimate defence. We are in line, we charge; if we do not overthrow those who are in front of us, they will not ask our permission to bleed us,—therefore, it is necessary to kill in order not to be demolished, the conscience is tranquil. But, my dear monsieur, it happened to me to break the back of a comrade under peculiar circumstances. On reflection, the thing has caused me pain, and the grimace of that man sometimes returns to me. You shall judge.—It was during the retreat from Moscow. We had more the appearance of being a herd of harassed cattle than of being the grand army. Farewell to discipline and to the flags, each one was his own master, and the Emperor, it may be said, learned there where his power ended.

"On arriving at Studzianka, a little village above the Béresina, we found barns, cabins to demolish, potatoes buried, and beets. For some time past we had encountered neither houses nor eatables,—so the army junketed. The first comers, as you may suppose, had eaten everything. I arrived one of the last. Happily for me, I was hungry only for

sleep. I perceive a barn, I enter it, I see some twenty generals, superior officers, all of them men, without flattering them, of great merit,—Junot, Narbonne, the aide-de-camp of the Emperor, in short, the great heads of the army. There were also simple soldiers who would not have given their bed of straw to a marshal of France. Some were sleeping standing, leaning against the wall for want of a place, others were stretched on the ground, and all so closely wedged together in order to keep warm that I sought vainly for a corner in which to place myself. You might see me walking on this flooring of men,—some of them growled, others said nothing, but no one moved. No one would have moved to avoid a cannon-ball, but you were not obliged there to follow the maxims of a puerile and respectable civility.

"Finally, I perceived at the back of the barn a species of interior roof on which no one had had the idea, or perhaps the strength, to climb. I mount on it, I arrange myself, and when I am stretched out at length I look down at these men laid out like calves. This sorrowful spectacle almost made me laugh. Some were eating frozen carrots, giving expression to a sort of animal pleasure, and generals wrapped in old shawls snored like thunder. A flaming fir bough lit up the barn; it might have set fire to it, no one would have risen to extinguish it. I am lying on my back, and, before going to sleep, I naturally raise my eyes in the air,—I then see the main beam on which the roof rested and

which supported the rafters make a slight movement from east to west. This cursed beam danced very prettily. 'Messieurs,' I said to them, 'there is a comrade outside who wishes to warm himself at our expense.' The beam was on the point of falling. 'Messieurs, messieurs, we are about to be killed, look at the beam!' I cried loudly enough to awaken my bed-fellows. Monsieur, they indeed looked at the beam, but those who were sleeping went to sleep again; and those who were eating did not even reply to me.

"Seeing this, it was necessary for me to leave my place, at the risk of having it taken, for it was a question of saving this heap of glories. I accordingly go out, I go around the barn, and I perceive a great devil of a Würtemberger who was pulling at the beam with a certain enthusiasm. 'Aho! aho!' I say to him, making him understand that he must cease his labors. '*Gehe mir aus dem Gesicht, oder ich schlage dich todt!*'—Get out of my sight, or I will strike you dead!—he cried. 'Ah, well, yes! *Qué mire aous dem guesit,*'—imitation of the German,—I replied to him, 'that is not the question!' I take his musket which he had left on the ground, I break his back, I re-enter the barn and go to sleep. That is the story."

"But that was a case of legitimate defence applied against one man for the sake of many others; you have, then, nothing with which to reproach yourself," said Benassis.

"The others," resumed Genestas, "thought I

had some crotchet in my head; but, crotchet or not, many of those individuals are now living at their ease in fine mansions without having their hearts oppressed by gratitude."

"Would you not have done good, then, except to receive that exorbitant interest which is called gratitude?" said Benassis, laughing. "That would be to take usury."

"Ah! I know very well," replied Genestas, "that the merit of a good action disappears at the slightest interest that you derive from it; to relate it, that is to set up for yourself an income of self-love which is worth quite as much as gratitude. However, if the honest man is always silent, the one obliged scarcely ever speaks of the benefit. In your system, the people have need of examples; now, in this general silence, where, then, will they find them? One thing more! If our poor *pontonnier*, who saved the French army and who has never found himself in a position to gabble about it profitably, had not preserved the use of his arms, would his conscience have given him his daily bread?—Answer that, philosopher?"

"Perhaps there is nothing absolute in morals," replied Benassis; "but this idea is dangerous, it allows egotism to interpret cases of conscience to the profit of personal interest. Listen, captain,—the man who obeys strictly the principles of morality, is he not greater than he who departs from them, even through necessity? Our *pontonnier*, entirely crippled and dying with hunger, would he not be sublime in

the very same qualities that make Homer sublime? Human life is doubtless a last trial for virtue as for genius, both of them claimed by a better world. Virtue and genius seem to me the two finest forms of that complete and constant devotion which Jesus Christ came to teach to men. Genius remains poor while enlightening the world, virtue keeps silence in sacrificing herself for the general good."

"Agreed, monsieur," said Genestas, "but the earth is inhabited by men and not by angels; we are not perfect."

"You are right," replied Benassis. "For my part, I have greatly abused the faculty of committing faults. But should we not tend toward perfection? Is not virtue a beautiful ideal for the soul which it is necessary to contemplate ceaselessly as a celestial model?"

"Amen!" said the soldier. "We will grant it to you, the virtuous man is a beautiful object; but admit also that virtue is a divinity which can permit a little bit of conversation, in all good, all honor."

"Ah! monsieur," said the physician, smiling with a sort of bitter melancholy, "you have the indulgence of those who live in peace with themselves, whilst I am severe like a man who sees a great many stains to efface in his life—"

The two horsemen had arrived at a thatched cottage situated on the edge of the torrent. The doctor entered it. Genestas remained on the threshold of the door, regarding alternately the spectacle offered by this fresh landscape and the interior of the

cottage, in which was a man in bed. After having examined his patient, Benassis suddenly exclaimed:

"There is no use in my coming here, my good woman, if you do not do what I order! You have given some bread to your husband; you wish, then, to kill him? *Sac-à-papier!* if you give him henceforth anything but his *eau de chiendent,—triticum repens,—* I will not set foot here again, and you can go and look for a doctor wherever you like."

"But, my dear Monsieur Benassis, the poor old man was sick with hunger, and when a man has not put anything in his stomach for two weeks—"

"Now, then, will you listen to me? If you allow your man to eat a single mouthful of bread before I permit him to take nourishment, you will kill him, do you hear?"

"He shall not have anything, my dear monsieur—Is he better?" said she, following the doctor.

"Why, no; you have made him worse by giving him something to eat. I cannot, then, persuade you, obstinate that you are, not to give nourishment to people who should diet? The peasants are incorrigibles!" added Benassis, turning to the officer. "When a sick man has eaten nothing for a few days, they think he is dead, and stuff him with soup or with wine. Here is a wretched woman who has all but killed her husband."

"Killed my husband with a poor little bit of bread soaked in wine!"

"Certainly, my good woman. I am surprised to find him still alive after the bread soaked in wine

you gave him. Do not forget to do exactly what I have said to you."

"Oh! my dear monsieur, I would rather die myself than fail to do so."

"Well, we will see about that. To-morrow evening I will return to bleed him. We will follow the torrent on foot," said Benassis to Genestas; "from this point to the house where I must go there is no road for the horses. This man's little boy will watch our animals. Admire our pretty valley a little!" he resumed; "is it not an English garden? We are going to the house of a workman, inconsolable for the death of one of his children. His eldest, still young, during the last harvest wished to do a man's work, the poor child exceeded his strength, he died of weakness at the end of the autumn. This is the first time that I have encountered the paternal sentiment so strongly developed. Usually, the peasants regret in the death of their children the loss of a useful thing which constitutes a part of their fortune; the regrets are in proportion to their age. When an adult, the child becomes a capital for its father. But this poor man loved his son truly. 'Nothing consoles me for this loss!' he said to me one day when I saw him in a meadow, standing motionless, forgetting his work, leaning on his scythe, holding in his hand his whetstone, which he had taken to use, and which he was not using. He has not spoken to me since of his grief, but he has become taciturn and suffering. To-day, one of his little girls is sick—"

While still talking, Benassis and his guest arrived

at a little house situated on the road to a bark-mill. There, under a willow, they perceived a man of about forty years of age, standing and eating bread rubbed with garlic.

"Well, Gasnier, is the little one better?"

"I do not know, monsieur," he replied, with a sombre air, "you are going to see her; my wife is with her. Notwithstanding all your cares, I am afraid that Death has entered my house to carry off everything from me."

"Death does not take up his lodging in any-one's house, Gasnier; he has not the time. Do not lose courage."

Benassis entered the house, followed by the father. A half-hour later he came out, accompanied by the mother, to whom he said:

"Do not be anxious, do that which I have recommended you to do, she is saved. If all this bores you," said the doctor to the soldier, as they remounted, "I can put you on the road to the town, and you can return there."

"No, upon my word, I am not bored in the least."

"But you will see everywhere thatched cottages which resemble each other; nothing is, apparently, more monotonous than the country."

"Let us go on," said the soldier.

For several hours they thus traversed the country, crossing the whole width of the canton, and, toward evening, they returned to the neighborhood of the town.

"I must go down there," said the physician to Genestas, indicating a locality where grew several elms. "These trees are, perhaps, two hundred years old," he added. "There lives that woman for whom a lad came to seek me yesterday just at dinner-time, telling me that she had become quite white."

"Was it dangerous?"

"No," said Benassis, "an effect of pregnancy. This woman is in her last month. It frequently happens at this period that women have spasms. But it is always necessary, as a precaution, that I should go to see if anything alarming has happened; I will deliver this woman myself. Moreover, I will show you one of our new industries, a brick-field. The road is good, will you gallop?"

"Will your horse follow me?" said Genestas, saying to his own: "Up, Neptune!"

In the twinkling of an eye the officer was carried off a hundred feet, and disappeared in a whirlwind of dust; but, notwithstanding the swiftness of his horse, he constantly heard the doctor at his side. Benassis said a word to his own animal, and outstripped the commandant, who rejoined him only at the brick-works, at the moment when the doctor was tranquilly tying his horse to the turnstile of a brushwood fence.

"May the devil fly away with you!" exclaimed Genestas, looking at the horse which was neither blowing nor sweating. "What kind of a beast have you there, anyhow?"

"Ah!" replied the doctor, laughing, "you took him

for a screw. At this moment, the story of this fine animal would take too much of our time; let it suffice you to know that Roustan is a true Barbary horse from the Atlas Mountains. A Barbary horse is worth an Arab horse. Mine ascends the mountains at full gallop without turning a hair, and trots sure-footed along the edge of the precipices. It was a gift well-earned, moreover. A father thought to pay me thus for the life of his daughter, one of the richest heiresses of Europe, whom I found dying on the road to Savoy. If I should tell you how I cured this young woman, you would take me for a charlatan. Ah! I hear the bells of the horses and the noise of a cart in the by-road,—let us see if, by chance, this shall be Vigneau himself, and look well at this man!"

Presently the officer perceived four enormous horses harnessed like those owned by the most well-to-do husbandmen of La Brie. The woollen ear-knots, the bells, the coats, had a sort of prosperous tidiness about them. In this enormous cart, painted blue, was a great chubby-faced youth, browned by the sun, who was whistling while holding his whip like a musket at the carry-arms.

"No, it is only the carter," said Benassis. "Admire for a moment how the industrial prosperity of the master is reflected in everything, even in the equipment of this driver. Is it not the indication of a commercial intelligence sufficiently rare in the depths of the country?"

"Yes, yes; all that seems to be very well decked out," replied the soldier.

"Well, Vigneau owns two similar turn-outs. In addition, he has his little riding-pony, on which he goes about his affairs, for his business now extends to a great distance; and, four years ago, this man possessed nothing! I am mistaken, he had debts—But let us enter."

"My lad," said Benassis to the carter, "Madame Vigneau is at home?"

"Monsieur, she is in the garden; I have just seen her over the hedge; I will go to notify her of your arrival."

Genestas followed Benassis, who made him traverse a large enclosure surrounded by hedges. In a corner was piled up the white earth and the clay required for the manufacture of tiles and white bricks; in another corner were heaped up the fagots of wood and the heather for heating the furnace; farther on, on a space surrounded by hurdle-work, several workmen were breaking up white stones or manipulating the brick clay; opposite the entrance, under the great elms, was the manufactory of round and square tiles, a great hall of verdure terminating in the roofs of the drying-sheds, near to which might be seen the furnace and its deep throat, its long shovels, its hollow and black passage-way. Parallel with these constructions was a building, sufficiently poor in aspect, which served as habitation for the family and in which the wagon-houses, the stables, the cow-houses, the barn, had been constructed. Chickens and pigs wandered about in the large enclosure. The cleanness which pervaded these different

establishments, and their good state of repair, testified to the vigilance of the master.

"Vigneau's predecessor," said Benassis, "was a wretch, an idler who loved only to drink. Formerly a workman, he knew how to heat his furnace and attend to his moulds, that was all; he had neither activity nor commercial spirit. If no one came for his merchandise, it remained there, deteriorating and ruining. Consequently, he was always starving. His wife, whom he had rendered almost imbecile by his bad treatment, grovelled in poverty. This idleness, this incurable stupidity, was so painful to me, and the aspect of this establishment was so disagreeable to me, that I avoided passing this way. Fortunately, this man and his wife were both old.

"One fine day, the tile-maker had a paralytic stroke, and I immediately had him placed in the hospital at Grenoble. The proprietor of the tile-works consented to take them back without dispute in the state in which they were, and I sought some new tenants who would be able to participate in the ameliorations which I wished to introduce in all the industries of the canton. The husband of Madame Gravier's *femme de chambre*, a poor workman earning very small wages with a potter for whom he worked, and who could not support his family, took my advice. This man had sufficient courage to take our tile-works on a lease without having a denier to his name. He installed himself, taught his wife, his wife's old mother, and his own to make tiles; he constituted them his workmen. Upon the word of an

honest man! I do not know how they managed it. Probably Vigneau borrowed the wood to heat his furnace, he doubtless went by night to seek for his materials by panierfuls at a time, and manufactured them during the day; in short, he manifested secretly a boundless energy, and the two old mothers, in rags, worked like negroes. Vigneau was thus able to turn out several kilnfuls, and got through his first year, eating bread dearly bought with the sweat of his family; but he sustained himself. His courage, his patience, his qualities, rendered him interesting to many persons, and he made himself known. Indefatigable, he hastened in the morning to Grenoble, there sold his tiles and his bricks; then he came back to his own place toward the middle of the day, and returned to the city during the night; he seemed to multiply himself.

"Toward the end of the first year he took two young lads to aid him. Seeing this, I lent him some money. Well, monsieur, the condition of this family ameliorated from year to year. In the second year, the two old mothers no longer made bricks, nor broke up the stones; they cultivated the little gardens, made the soup, mended the garments, spun during the evening, and gathered wood in the daytime. The young wife, who knew how to read and write, kept the accounts. Vigneau had a little horse with which to go about the neighborhood to look for customers; then he studied the art of brickmaking, found a method of manufacturing handsome square white tiles, and sold them under the current price.

The third year, he had a cart and two horses. When he set up his first cart, his wife became almost elegant. Everything in his household was in accord with his gains, and he always maintained there order, economy, cleanliness, the generating principles of his little fortune. He was finally able to have six workmen and to pay them well; he had a carter, and set everything about him on a very good footing; in short, little by little, by using his ingenuity, by extending his fabrication and his business, he found himself in comfortable circumstances.

"Last year he purchased the tile-works; next year he will rebuild his house. At present, all these good people are in good condition and well clothed. The wife, thin and pale, who at first shared the cares and the anxieties of her husband, has again become plump, fresh, and pretty. The two old mothers are very happy, and superintend the minor details of the house and the business. Labor has produced money, and money, in giving tranquillity, has bestowed health, abundance, and cheerfulness. Truly, this household is for me the living history of my commune and that of young commercial States. These tile-works, which I used to see dull, empty, dirty, unproductive, are now in full activity, well peopled, animated, rich, and well furnished. See, there is a good amount of wood, and all the materials necessary for the work of the season,—for you know that tiles are only manufactured during a certain part of the year, between June and September. Does not all this activity give pleasure?

My tile-maker has co-operated in all the buildings of the town. Always wide-awake, always going and coming, always active, he is called *the devouring* * by the people of the canton."

Benassis had scarcely pronounced these words, when a young woman, well dressed, with a pretty cap, white stockings, a silk apron, a pink dress, a costume that recalled somewhat her former state as a *femme de chambre*, opened the latticed door which led into the garden and came forward as rapidly as her condition would admit. But the two horsemen went to meet her. Madame Vigneau was, in fact, a pretty woman, plump enough, with a tanned complexion, although her skin, naturally, should be fair. Although her forehead retained some wrinkles, vestiges of her former poverty, she had a happy and attractive countenance.

"Monsieur Benassis," said she, with a persuasive accent, on seeing him stop, "will you not do me the honor to rest a moment in my house?"

"Certainly," he replied. "Captain, pass in."

"These messieurs must be quite warm! Will you have a little milk, or some wine? Monsieur Benassis, taste the wine that my husband has had the kindness to procure for my confinement; you will tell me if it is good."

"You have a worthy man for a husband."

"Yes, monsieur," she replied, calmly, turning round, "I have been greatly favored!"

* *Le dévorant*, or *le devoirant*, was one of an association of workmen. (See *History of the Thirteen*.)

"We will not take anything, Madame Vigneau; I came only to see if any accident had happened to you."

"Nothing," she said. "You see, I was in the garden occupied in turning up the ground, for something to do."

At this moment the two mothers came up to see Benassis, and the carter remained motionless in the middle of the court in a position that permitted him to see the doctor.

"Let us see, give me your hand," said he to Madame Vigneau.

He felt the pulse of the young wife with a scrupulous attention, remaining thoughtful and silent. During this time the three women were examining the commandant with that naïve curiosity which the country people have no shame in expressing.

"All for the best," exclaimed the doctor, cheerfully.

"Will she soon be delivered?" said the two mothers.

"Why, this week, doubtless. Vigneau is on the road?" he asked, after a pause.

"Yes, monsieur," replied the young wife; "he is hurrying up his affairs so that he can remain at home when I am brought to bed, the dear man!"

"Go on, my children, and prosper! Continue to increase your fortune and to increase the world."

Genestas was full of admiration for the cleanliness which pervaded the interior of this almost ruined

house. On seeing the officer's surprise, Benassis said to him:

"It is only Madame Vigneau who knows how to keep a household thus neat! I should like it if several of the people of the town came here to get some lessons."

The tile-maker's wife turned her head away, blushing; but the two mothers frankly allowed to appear on their faces all the pleasure which the doctor's eulogy caused them, and all three of them accompanied him to the spot where the horses stood.

"Well," said Benassis, addressing the two old women, "now you are very happy. Did you not wish to be grandmothers?"

"Ah! do not speak to me of them," said the young wife, "they set me wild. My two mothers want a boy; my husband desires a little girl,—I think that it will be very difficult for me to content them all."

"But you, what do you want?" said Benassis, laughing.

"Ah! I, monsieur, I want a child."

"You see, she is already a mother," said the doctor to the officer, as he took his horse by the bridle.

"Adieu, Monsieur Benassis," said the young wife. "My husband will be very sorry not to have been here when he learns that you came."

"He has not forgotten to send me my thousand tiles to the Grange-aux-Belles?"

"You know very well that he would leave all the orders in the canton to serve you. Yes, his greatest regret is to take your money; but I say to him that your crowns bring good luck, and that is true."

"*Au revoir*," said Benassis.

The three women, the carter, and the two workmen, who had come out of the buildings to see the doctor, stood in a group about the rustic fence which served as an entrance to the tile-works, so as to enjoy his presence up to the last moment, as all of us do for those dear to us. Should not the inspirations of the heart be the same everywhere! thus the pleasant customs of friendship are naturally observed in every country.

After having looked at the sun, Benassis said to his companion:

"We have still two hours of daylight, and, if you are not too hungry, we will go to see a charming creature to whom I almost always give the time which I have left between the hour of my dinner and that in which my visits are ended. She is called my *bonne amie* in the canton; but do not think that this appellation, here used to designate a future spouse, can cover or authorize the slightest slander. Although my care for this poor child renders her the object of a jealousy that may readily be comprehended, the opinion which everyone has formed of my character forbids all malicious suggestions.

"If no one is able to explain to himself the whim to which I seem to yield in allowing to La Fosseuse an income which enables her to live without working,

everybody believes in her virtue; everybody knows that if my affection once passed the bounds of a friendly protection I should not hesitate a moment to marry her. But," added the doctor, forcing a smile, "there does not exist any wife for me, neither in this canton nor elsewhere. An expansive man, my dear monsieur, feels an invincible need of attaching himself particularly to one thing or to one being among all the beings and all the things with which he is surrounded, above all, when for him life is empty. Therefore, believe me, always judge favorably a man who loves his dog or his horse! Among the many sufferers which chance has confided to me, this poor little sick one is for me what, in my country of the sun, in Languedoc, is the favorite ewe on which the shepherdesses put faded ribbons, to which they talk, which they allow to pasture by the side of the grain, and whose lagging steps the dog never hastens."

As he spoke these words, Benassis remained standing, grasping the mane of his horse, ready to mount, and yet not mounting, as though the feeling which moved him was one which could not accord with any sudden movement.

"Come," he exclaimed, "let us go to see her! To take you to her house, is not that to say to you that I treat her like a sister?"

When the two horsemen were mounted, Genestas said to the doctor:

"Should I be indiscreet in asking of you some information concerning your Fosseuse? Among all

the existences with which you have made me acquainted, she should not be the least interesting."

"Monsieur," replied Benassis, stopping his horse, "perhaps you will not share in all the interest with which La Fosseuse inspires me. Her destiny resembles my own, we have both missed our vocations; the sentiment which I have for her, and the emotions which I experience in seeing her, arise from the similarity of our situations. Once entered on the career of arms, you have followed your inclination, or you have acquired a liking for this calling; otherwise you would not have remained till your present age under the heavy harness of military discipline; therefore you would naturally not comprehend either the unhappiness of a soul, the desires of which constantly arise and are constantly disappointed, or the constant griefs of a creature forced to live otherwise than in her own sphere. Such sufferings remain a secret between these creatures and God, who sends to them these afflictions, for they alone are acquainted with the force of the impressions produced upon them by the events of life.

"Nevertheless, you yourself, a hardened witness of so many misfortunes produced in the course of a long war, have you not surprised in your own heart a certain melancholy on seeing a tree the leaves of which were yellow in the midst of spring, a tree languishing and dying through not having been planted in a soil in which might be found the elements necessary to its entire development? From

the age of twenty, the passive melancholy of a stunted plant has always been painful for me to see; to-day I always turn my head away at this sight. My youthful distress was the vague presentiment of my sorrows as a man, a sort of sympathy between my present and a future which I perceived instinctively in this vegetable life bowed before its time toward that final term which awaits both trees and men."

"I thought, when I saw you to be so good, that you had suffered!"

"You comprehend, monsieur," resumed the physician, without replying to this speech of Genestas, "that to speak of La Fosseuse is to speak of myself. La Fosseuse is a plant exiled, but a human plant, devoured incessantly by sad or profound thoughts which multiply themselves by each other. This poor girl is always suffering. In her, the soul is killing the body. Could I see with coldness a feeble creature a prey to the unhappiness the greatest and the least appreciated that there is in our egotistical world, when I, a man and strong against suffering, am tempted every evening to refuse to carry the burden of a similar unhappiness? Perhaps I would even refuse, were it not for a religious idea which blunts my grief and expands in my heart soft illusions. Were we not all the children of the same God, La Fosseuse would still be my sister in suffering!"

Benassis pressed the flanks of his horse and hastened on the commandant Genestas, as though

he dreaded continuing in this tone the conversation commenced.

"Monsieur," he resumed, when the horses were trotting together, "Nature has, so to speak, created this poor girl for pain, as she has created other women for pleasure. When we see such predestinations, it is impossible not to believe in another life. Everything affects La Fosseuse, — if the weather is gray and sombre, she is mournful and *weeps with the sky;* this expression belongs to her. She sings with the birds, becomes calm and serene again with the weather; finally she becomes beautiful on a fine day; a delicate perfume is for her an almost inexhaustible pleasure,—I have seen her enjoying for an entire day the odor exhaled by mignonette after one of those rainy mornings which develop the souls of flowers and give to the day I do not know what freshness and brilliancy; she had expanded with nature, with all the plants. If the atmosphere is heavy, charged with electricity, La Fosseuse has vapors which nothing can calm, she goes to bed and complains of a thousand different ills without knowing what it is that ails her; if I question her, she replies that her bones are softening, that her flesh is dissolving into water. During these inanimate hours she is conscious of life only through suffering; her heart is *outside of her*, to repeat to you another of her sayings.

"Sometimes I have seen the poor girl weeping at the appearance of certain scenes which are formed in our mountains at sunset, when numerous and

magnificent clouds gather over our golden peaks. 'Why do you weep, my little one?' I said to her. 'I do not know, monsieur,' she replied; 'I am like one stupefied in looking up, and I do not know where I am, through looking.' 'But what do you see then?' 'Monsieur, I cannot tell it to you.' In vain you questioned her then during a whole evening, you would not draw from her a single word; but she would give you looks full of thoughtfulness, or remain with humid eyes, half silent, evidently meditating. Her meditation is so profound that it communicates itself; at least, she then acts upon me like a cloud too much charged with electricity. One day I pressed her with questions, I made every effort to make her talk and I said to her a few words a little too earnest,—well, monsieur, she melted into tears. At other moments La Fosseuse is cheerful, attractive, laughing, active, spirituelle; she converses with pleasure, expresses novel ideas, original ones. Incapable, moreover, of any kind of consecutive work, when she goes into the fields, she remains for entire hours occupied in looking at a flower, in watching running water, in examining the picturesque marvels which are to be found under clear and tranquil streams, those pretty mosaics composed of pebbles, of earth, of sand, of aquatic plants, of mosses, of brownish sediments of which the colors are so soft, of which the tones offer such curious contrasts.

"When I first arrived in this country, the poor girl was dying with hunger; humiliated at accepting

the bread of others, she had had recourse to public charity only at the moment she was compelled to do so by extreme suffering. Frequently, shame giving her energy, she would labor in the fields for several days; but, very soon exhausted, a malady would oblige her to abandon the work commenced. When scarcely restored, she would go to some farm in the neighborhood and ask to take charge of the cattle; but, after discharging her tasks with intelligence, she would leave without giving a reason. Her daily labor was doubtless too heavy a yoke for her, as she was all independence and caprice. Then she would gather truffles and mushrooms, and go to sell them in Grenoble. In the city, tempted by some trinkets, she forgot her poverty in finding herself rich with some small coins, and would buy herself ribbons and knick-knacks without thinking of her to-morrow's bread. Then, if some young girl of the town desired her brass cross, her heart *à la Jeannette*, or her velvet ribbon, she would give them to her, happy in bestowing pleasure, for she lived by her affections. Thus La Fosseuse was alternately loved, pitied, and contemned. The poor girl suffered in everything,—in her idleness, in her generosity, in her coquetry; for she is coquettish, dainty, curious; in short, she is a woman, she yields to her impressions and to her tastes with the naïveté of a child,—relate to her some fine action, she thrills and reddens, her breast heaves, she weeps for joy; if you tell her some story of robbery, she grows pale with fright. It is the truest nature, the frankest heart, and the

most delicate probity that can be met with; if you were to confide to her a hundred pieces of gold, she would bury them in a corner and continue to beg her bread."

There was an alteration in the doctor's voice as he pronounced these words.

"I wished to try her, monsieur," he went on, "and I repented of it. A trial, is it not spying, suspicion at the very least?"

Here the doctor paused as if making some secret reflection, and in nowise noticed the embarrassment into which his words had thrown his companion, who, not to allow his confusion to be perceived, occupied himself in disentangling his horse's reins. Benassis presently resumed his discourse.

"I should like to marry off my Fosseuse, I would give willingly one of my farms to some worthy youth who would render her happy, and she would be. Yes, the poor girl would love her children to distraction, and all the sentiments which are superabundant in her would expand in that which comprehends them all for the woman, in *maternity;* but no man has been able to please her. She has, however, a sensitiveness that is dangerous for her; she is aware of it, and confessed to me her nervous predisposition when she saw that I perceived it. She is of the small number of women in whom the slightest contact produces a dangerous thrill; for this reason we may admire her discretion, her womanly pride. She is as wild as a swallow. Ah! what a rich

nature, monsieur! She was made to be a woman opulent, beloved; she would have been beneficent and constant. At twenty-two, she is already sinking under the weight of her soul, and perishing a victim of her too vibrating fibres, of her organization too strong or too delicate. A vivid passion betrayed, would render her mad, my poor Fosseuse!

"After having studied her temperament, after having recognized the reality of her long nervous attacks and of her electric aspirations, after having found her in most striking harmony with the changes in the atmosphere, with the variations of the moon, facts which I have carefully verified, I have taken charge of her, monsieur, as of a creature outside of the others, one whose sickly, delicate existence could be comprehended by me alone. It is, as I said to you, the ewe with the ribbons. But you are going to see her, there is her little house."

At this moment they had arrived at about a third of the height of the mountain by slopes bordered by bushes, which they ascended at a walk. On attaining the turning of one of these slopes, Genestas perceived the house of La Fosseuse. This habitation was situated on one of the principal hillocks of the mountain. There, a pretty sward on a slope, of about three arpents in extent, planted with trees and from which sprang several cascades, was surrounded by a little wall high enough to serve as an enclosure, not high enough to shut off the view of the country. The house, built of bricks and covered with a flat roof which extended over on every side for several

feet, made a charming effect in the landscape. It consisted of a ground-floor and a first floor with a door and outside shutters painted green. Facing the south, it had neither sufficient depth nor width to have any other openings than those of the front, the rustic elegance of which consisted in an excessive neatness. The little protruding penthouses in the German manner were lined with boards painted white. Some acacias in flower and other odorous plants, some thorn-roses, climbing plants, a great walnut-tree which had been spared and some weeping-willows growing in the streams, surrounded this house. Behind it was a large group of beech-trees and firs, a great dark background against which this pretty little building was sharply relieved.

At this hour of the day, the air was balmy with the different odors of the mountain and of the garden of La Fosseuse. The sky, pure and tranquil, was cloudy at the horizon. In the distance, the summits began to assume the rosy tints which the setting sun often gives them. At this height, the valley could be seen in its full extent, from Grenoble to the circular enclosing rocks at the bottom of which is the little lake which Genestas had crossed the day before. Above the house, and at a sufficiently great distance, appeared the line of poplars which indicated the great highway from the town to Grenoble. And finally the town, obliquely traversed by the rays of the sun, sparkled like a diamond in reflecting from all its windows the red illumination which seemed to twinkle. At this sight, Genastas stopped

his horse, pointed to the buildings in the valley, the new town, and the house of La Fosseuse.

"Next to the victory of Wagram and the return of Napoléon to the Tuileries in 1815," said he, with a sigh, "this gives me the greatest emotion. I owe to you this pleasure, monsieur, for you have taught me to know the beauties which a man can find at the sight of a landscape."

"Yes," said the doctor, smiling, "it is better to build cities than to take them."

"Oh! monsieur, the taking of Moscow and the surrender of Mantua! But you do not know what that is! Is it not our glory for all of us? You are a brave man, but Napoléon also was a good man; had it not been for England, you two would have appreciated each other and he would never have fallen, our Emperor; I can well admit that I love him now, he is dead! — and," said the officer, looking around him, "there are no spies here. What a sovereign! he knew the whole world by instinct! he would have placed you in his Council of State because he was an administrator, and a great administrator, even to knowing how many cartridges there were in the pouches after an action. Poor man! Whilst you were speaking to me of your Fosseuse, I was thinking that he was dead at Saint Helena, he! *Hein!* was that the climate and the dwelling that could satisfy the man accustomed to live with his feet in the stirrups and his posteriors on a throne? It is said that he had a garden there. The deuce! he was not made for planting cabbages.

Now, we must serve the Bourbons, and loyally, monsieur; for, after all, France is France, as you said yesterday."

As he uttered these last words, Genestas dismounted and mechanically imitated Benassis, who was attaching his horse by the bridle to a tree.

"Is she not here?" said the doctor, not seeing La Fosseuse on the threshold of the door.

They entered and found no one in the salon on the ground-floor.

"She heard the noise of the two horses," said Benassis, smiling, "and has gone upstairs to put on a cap, a girdle, some adornment."

He left Genestas alone, and went up himself to look for La Fosseuse. The commandant examined the salon. The walls were covered with a paper with a gray background spotted with roses, and the floor with a matting of straw in imitation of a carpet. The chairs, the easy-chair, and the table were of wood that still retained its bark. A kind of flower vases, made of hoops and willow-work, filled with flowers and mosses, decorated this chamber, the windows of which were draped with curtains of white percale with red fringes. On the mantelpiece was a mirror, a plain porcelain vase between two lamps; near the easy-chair a stool in fir-wood; then, on the table, some linen cut out, some gussets prepared, shirts commenced, in short, all the paraphernalia of a seamstress,—her basket, her scissors, needle, and thread. All this was as clean and fresh as a shell thrown up by the sea on a

corner of the beach. On the other side of the corridor, at the end of which was a stairway, Genestas saw a kitchen. The first story, like the ground-floor, could consist of only two rooms.

"Do not be afraid," said Benassis to La Fosseuse. "Come, now, come down!"

On hearing these words, Genestas promptly returned to the salon. A young girl, slender and with a good figure, wearing a dress with a neckerchief of pink percaline with a thousand stripes, presently appeared, red with shame and timidity. Her face was remarkable only in a certain flattening of the features, which made it resemble those Cossack and Russian countenances which the disasters of 1814 unfortunately rendered so familiar in France. La Fosseuse had, in fact, like the people of the North, the nose elevated at the end and much sunken; her mouth was large, her chin small, her hands and her arms were red, her feet large and strong like those of the peasant women. Although she had been exposed to the harsh effects of the weather, to the sun, and the open air, her complexion was as pale as a withered herb, but this lack of color made her face interesting at the first glance; then she had in her blue eyes an expression so gentle, in her movements so much grace, in her voice so much soul, that, notwithstanding the apparent want of harmony between her features and the qualities which Benassis had praised to the commandant, the latter recognized the capricious and sickly creature, a prey to all the sufferings of a nature thwarted in

its developments. After having briskly stirred up a fire of peat and dry branches, La Fosseuse seated herself in an armchair and resumed her work on an unfinished shirt, remaining under the officer's eyes, half-ashamed, not venturing to raise her own eyes, calm in appearance; but the hurried movement of her corsage, the beauty of which struck Genestas, betrayed her fear.

"Well, my poor child, are you getting on well?" said Benassis to her, taking up the pieces of linen destined to make shirts.

La Fosseuse looked at the doctor with a timid and supplicating air.

"Do not scold me, monsieur," she replied; "I have done nothing on them to-day, although they were ordered of me by you and for people who are in great need of them; but the weather was so beautiful! I went out walking, I gathered for you mushrooms and white truffles, which I carried to Jacquotte: she was very well pleased, for you have company to dinner. I was very happy to have guessed that. Something told me to go in search of them."

And she returned to her sewing.

"You have here, mademoiselle, a very pretty house," said Genestas to her.

"It is not mine at all, monsieur," she replied, looking at the stranger with eyes that seemed to blush, "it belongs to Monsieur Benassis."

And she turned her eyes softly upon the doctor.

"You know very well, my child," said he, taking

A VISIT TO LA FOSSEUSE

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Daniel Hernandez

her by the hand, "that you will never be turned out of it."

La Fosseuse rose suddenly and left the room.

"Well," said the doctor to the officer, "what do you think of her?"

"Why," replied Genestas, "she singularly affected me. Ah! you have arranged her nest very nicely, indeed!"

"Bah! paper at fifteen or twenty sous, but well selected, that was all. The furniture is no great things, it was made by my basket-maker, who wished to testify his gratitude to me. La Fosseuse made the curtains herself, with a few yards of calico. Her dwelling, her very simple furniture, seems to you pretty because you find it on the slope of a mountain, in a forsaken country where you did not expect to find anything neat and clean; but the secret of this elegance is in a sort of harmony between the house and nature, which has here brought together the streams, some trees well grouped, and given this sward her most beautiful grasses, her perfumed strawberry-plants, her pretty violets—"

"Well, what is it?" said Benassis to La Fosseuse, who re-entered the room.

"Nothing, nothing," she replied; "I thought that one of my chickens was lost."

She was telling a falsehood; but the doctor alone perceived it, and whispered in her ear:

"You have been weeping!"

"Why do you say such things to me before anyone?" she replied.

"Mademoiselle," said Genestas to her, "you are very wrong to remain here all alone; in a cage so charming as this, you should have a husband."

"That is true," she said; "but, what would you have, monsieur! I am poor and I am hard to please. I do not feel inclined to go and carry soup into the fields or to drive a cart, to be conscious of the poverty of those whom I love without being able to put an end to it, to hold children in my arms all day, and to mend the ragged garments of a man. Monsieur the curé tells me that such thoughts as these are scarcely Christian; I know it very well, but what is to be done? On some days I prefer to eat a piece of dry bread rather than to prepare for myself something for dinner. Why would you have me burden a man with my faults? he would, perhaps, kill himself to satisfy my whims, and that would not be just. *Bast!* some kind of ill-fortune has been given to me, and I should support it alone."

"Moreover, she was born indolent, my poor Fosseuse," said Benassis, "and she must be taken as she is. But that which she has said to you means that she has not yet been in love with anyone," he added, laughing.

Then he rose and went out for a moment on the lawn.

"You must love Monsieur Benassis very much?" asked Genestas of her.

"Oh! yes, monsieur! and, like myself, there are many people in the canton who would like to cut

themselves in pieces for him. But he, who cures others, he has something himself which nothing can cure. You are his friend; you know, perhaps, what it is? Who is it that could give grief to a man like him, who is the real image of the good God on the earth? I know several here who believe that their grain grows better when he has passed by the side of their field in the morning."

"And you, what do you believe?"

"Why, monsieur, when I have seen him—"

She seemed to hesitate, then she added:

"I am happy for the whole day."

She lowered her head, and plied her needle with a singular rapidity.

"Well, has the captain told you some story about Napoléon?" said the doctor, re-entering.

"Monsieur has seen the Emperor?" exclaimed La Fosseuse, regarding the officer's face with a passionate curiosity.

"*Parbleu!*" said Genestas, "more than a thousand times."

"Ah! how much I should like to know about something military!"

"To-morrow, we will come, perhaps, to take a cup of *café au lait* with you. And you shall hear about *something military*, my child," said Benassis, taking her by the neck and kissing her on the forehead. "She is my daughter, you see!" he added, turning toward the commandant; "when I have not kissed her on the forehead, there is something missed for me in my day."

La Fosseuse clasped the hand of Benassis, and said to him, in a low voice:

"Oh! how good you are!"

They left her, but she followed them to see them mount. When Genestas was in the saddle:

"Who is, then, this monsieur?" she whispered in Benassis's ear.

"Ah! ah!" replied the doctor, setting his foot in the stirrup, "perhaps a husband for you."

She remained standing, watching them descend the slope, and when they passed the end of the garden, they still saw her, mounted upon a little pile of stones that she might still follow them with her eyes and make a last sign with her head.

"Monsieur, that young girl has something extraordinary about her," said Genestas to the physician when they were at some distance from the house.

"Has she not?" he replied. "I have said to myself twenty times that she would make a charming wife; but I could not love her other than as one loves his sister or his daughter, my heart is dead."

"Has she any relatives?" inquired Genestas. "What occupation had her father and mother?"

"Oh! that is quite a story," replied Benassis. "She has no longer either father or mother or relatives. There is nothing, not even to her name, which has not interested me. La Fosseuse was born in the town. Her father, a laboring man of Saint-Laurent-du-Pont, was named *Le Fosseur*, doubtless an abbreviation of *fossoyeur*,—grave-digger—

for, from time immemorial, the office of interring the dead had remained in his family. There is in this name all the melancholy of the cemetery. By virtue of a Roman custom, still in usage here, as in some other parts of France, and by which wives are given the names of their husbands with the addition of a feminine termination, this girl was called *la Fosseuse*, from her father's name. This day-laborer had married for love the *femme de chambre* of I know-not-what countess whose estates lay at a distance of a few leagues from the town. Here, as in all parts of the country, passion counts for but little in the marriages. Generally, the peasants want a wife in order to have children, to have a housekeeper who will make them good soup and bring it to them in the fields, who will spin their shirts and mend their garments.

"Such an episode had not happened in this district for a long time, here where a young man frequently deserts his *promise* for another young girl richer than she by three or four arpents of land. The state of the Fosseur and his wife was not fortunate enough to win our Dauphinois from their selfish calculations. The mother, who was a beautiful woman, died in child-bed of her daughter. The husband grieved so much at this loss that he died in the course of the year, leaving to his child nothing in the world but a frail and naturally very precarious existence. The little one was charitably taken care of by a female neighbor, who brought her up till she was nine years old. The charge of La Fosseuse

becoming too heavy a burden for this good woman, she sent her ward to beg her bread along the road in the season when many travellers are passing.

"One day, the orphan having gone to ask for bread at the château of the countess, was retained there in memory of her mother. Here, educated to take the position one day of *femme de chambre* to the daughter of the house, who was married five years later, the poor little one was during all this time the victim of all the caprices of the rich, who, for the most part, have nothing constant or sustained in their generosity,—benevolent at intervals and by whims, sometimes protectors, sometimes friends, sometimes masters, they falsify the already false situations of the unfortunate children in whom they interest themselves, and they divert themselves carelessly with their hearts, their lives, or their futures, considering them of but little value. La Fosseuse became at first almost the companion of the young heiress,—she was then taught to read, to write, and her future mistress amused herself at times by giving her lessons in music. Alternately young lady companion and waiting-maid, they made of her an incomplete being. She acquired a taste for luxury, for adornment, and contracted habits not in accord with her real position. Misfortune has since then rudely reformed her mind, but it has not been able to efface the vague sentiment of a superior destiny.

"Finally, one day, a day indeed fatal for this poor girl, the young countess, then married, surprised La Fosseuse, who was then no more than her *femme de*

chambre, arrayed in one of her ball-dresses and dancing before a mirror. The orphan, then sixteen years old, was dismissed without pity. Her indolence caused her to fall into poverty, to wander along the roads, to beg, to work, as I have related to you. Often she thought of drowning herself, sometimes also of giving herself to the first comer; the greater part of the time she lay in the sun, along a wall, sombre, thoughtful, her head in the grass; the travellers would then throw her a few sous, precisely because she asked for nothing. She was for a year in the hospital of Annecy, after a laborious harvest at which she had worked only in the hope of dying. You shall hear her relate herself her sentiments and her ideas during this period of her life; she is often very curious in her ingenuous confidences. Finally, she returned to the town about the period when I resolved to settle myself there. I wished to become acquainted with the mental qualities of those whom I was to look after. I therefore studied her character, which impressed me; then, after having observed her organic imperfections, I resolved to take care of her. Perhaps, in course of time, she will end by becoming accustomed to the task of sewing; but, in any case, I have assured her future."

"Is she entirely alone there?" asked Genestas.

"No, one of my shepherdesses goes to sleep with her," replied the physician. "You did not see the buildings of my farm which are above the house; they are concealed by the firs. Oh! she is in safety. Moreover, there are no evil characters in our valley;

if, by chance, any of them are met with, I send them to the army, where they make excellent soldiers."

"Poor girl!" said Genestas.

"Ah! the people of the canton do not commiserate her," replied Benassis; "they consider her, on the contrary, very fortunate; but there exists this difference between her and the other women, that to them God has given strength, to her, feebleness; and they do not see that."

At the moment when the two horsemen came out on the road to Grenoble, Benassis, who had foreseen the effect of this new extended view upon Genestas, stopped with an air of satisfaction to enjoy his surprise. Two walls of verdure, sixty feet high, enclosed, as far as the eye could see, a wide highway, rounded upward in the middle like a garden-walk, and constituting a natural monument which any man might be proud of having created. The trees, untrimmed, formed all of them those immense green palms which render the Italian poplar one of the most magnificent objects in the vegetable kingdom. One side of the road, already invaded by the shadows, presented a vast wall of dark leaves, whilst the other, strongly lit up by the setting sun which gave to the young twigs golden tints, offered the contrast of the play of color and reflections which the light and the breeze produced upon its moving curtain.

"You should be very happy here!" exclaimed Genestas. "Everything here is a pleasure for you."

"Monsieur," said the physician, "the love for Nature is the only one that does not deceive human hopes. Here, there are no deceptions. Look at those poplars of ten years' growth,—did you ever see any as well grown as mine?"

"God is great!" said the soldier, stopping in the middle of this road of which he could perceive neither the end nor the beginning.

"You do me good," exclaimed Benassis. "It gives me pleasure to hear you repeat what I have often said in the midst of this avenue. There is to be found here, certainly, something religious. We are here like two points, and the consciousness of our littleness brings us always nearer to God."

They rode along slowly and in silence, listening to the sound of their horses' hoofs, which resounded in this gallery of verdure as if they were under the vaults of a cathedral.

"How many emotions of which the inhabitants of cities have no suspicion!" said the doctor. "Do you smell the perfume exhaled by the propolis of the poplars and by the resin of the larch-trees? What delights!"

"Listen!" exclaimed Genestas. "Let us stop."

They then heard a singing in the distance.

"Is it a woman or a man? is it a bird?" asked the commandant under his breath. "Is it the voice of this great landscape?"

"There is something of all of them," replied the doctor, dismounting and tying his horse to a branch of a poplar.

Then he made a sign to the officer to imitate his example and to follow him. They went with slow steps along a path bordered with two hedges of hawthorn in flower which diffused penetrating odors in the humid evening air. The rays of the sun entered the path with a sort of impetuosity which the shadow projected by the long curtain of poplars rendered still more noticeable, and these vigorous jets of light enveloped with their reddish tints a thatched cottage situated at the end of this sandy road. A golden dust seemed to be thrown upon its roof of thatch, usually as brown as the shell of a chestnut, and the dilapidated ridges of which were green with house-leek and moss. The cottage could scarcely be seen in this mist of light; but the old walls, the doors, everything had a fugitive brilliancy, everything was fortuitously beautiful, as is the human countenance at moments, under the empire of some passion which lightens it up and colors it.

There are to be met with in the life in the open air these pleasant places, sylvan and momentary, which draw from us involuntarily the wish of the apostle saying to Jesus Christ on the mountain: "*Let us set up a tent and rest here.*" This landscape seemed to have at this moment a voice as pure and mild as it was itself pure and mild, but a voice sad as the light about to be extinguished in the west: vague image of death, a notification divinely given in the heavens by the sun, as it is given on earth by the flowers and the pretty ephemeral insects. At this hour the tints of the sun are touched with sadness,

and this song was sad; a popular song, moreover, a song of love and regret, which formerly had served the national hatred of France against England, but to which Beaumarchais has restored its true poetry, by translating it to the French stage and putting it in the mouth of a page who opens his heart to his godmother. This air was modulated without words in a plaintive tune by a voice which vibrated in the soul and affected it to tenderness.

"It is the swan's song," said Benassis. "In the course of a century, this voice does not sound twice in men's ears. Let us hasten, it is necessary to stop it from singing! This child is killing himself, it would be cruelty to listen longer.—Be silent, there, Jacques! Come, now, be silent!" cried the doctor.

The music ceased. Genestas remained standing, motionless and bewildered. A cloud covered the sun, the landscape and the voice were silent together. Shadow, cold, and silence replaced the soft splendors of the light, the warm emanations of the atmosphere, and the singing of the child.

"Why do you disobey me?" said Benassis. "I will give you no more rice-cakes, nor bouillon of snails, nor fresh dates, nor white bread! You then wish to die, and to break the heart of your poor mother?"

Genestas advanced into a little court, kept tolerably clean, and saw a boy of fifteen, feeble as a woman, blond, but having little hair and colored as though he had been rouging. He rose slowly from the bench on which he had been sitting under

a great jessamine, under flowering lilacs which pushed out in every direction and enveloped him with their foliage.

"You know very well," said the doctor, "that I told you to go to bed with the sun; not to expose yourself to the evening chill, and not to talk,—what induced you to sing?"

"*Dame!* Monsieur Benassis, it was very warm here, and it is so nice to be warm! I am always cold. When I felt so well, without thinking, I commenced to say to amuse myself: '*Malbrouk s'en va-t-en guerre,*' and I listened to myself, because my voice almost resembled that of the big flute of your shepherd."

"Come, now, my poor Jacques, do not let this happen to you again, do you hear?—Give me your hand."

The doctor felt his pulse. The child had blue eyes, usually very mild, but which a feverish expression now rendered brilliant.

"Ah, yes, I was sure of it, you are in a perspiration," said Benassis. "Your mother is not, then, at home?"

"No, monsieur!"

"Well, then, go into the house and go to bed."

The young patient, followed by Benassis and the officer, re-entered the cottage.

"Will you light a candle, Captain Bluteau," said the doctor, who was aiding Jacques to remove his coarse, ragged garments.

When Genestas had lit up the cottage, he was struck with the extreme thinness of this child, who

was no longer anything but skin and bone. When the little peasant was in bed, Benassis tapped him on the chest, listening to the sound produced by his fingers; then, after considering carefully these sounds of ill omen, he drew the coverings over Jacques, fell back four steps, crossed his arms, and proceeded to examine him.

"How do you feel, my little man?"

"Comfortable, monsieur."

Benassis pushed up to the bed a table with four turned legs, looked for a glass and a vial on the mantelpiece, and composed a potion by mingling with pure water a few drops of a brown liquid contained in the vial, and carefully measured by the light of the candle which Genestas held for him.

"Your mother is a long time coming back."

"Monsieur, she is coming," said the child, "I hear her on the path."

The doctor and the officer waited and looked around them. At the foot of the bed was a mattress of moss, without sheets or covering, on which the mother slept, doubtless in all her clothes. Genestas indicated this bed with his finger to Benassis, who nodded his head slowly as if to say that he, too, had already admired this maternal devotion. A noise of sabots having been heard in the court, the doctor went out.

"It will be necessary to watch with Jacques to-night, Mother Colas. If he tells you that he is suffocating, you will give him a drink of that which I have put in a glass on the table. Be careful to give

him no more than two or three swallows each time. What is in the glass should last him all night. Above all, do not touch the vial, and begin by changing your child's linen, he is in a perspiration."

"I was not able to wash his shirts to-day, my dear monsieur; I was obliged to carry my hemp to Grenoble to get some money."

"Well, I will send you some shirts."

"He is then worse, my poor boy?" asked the woman.

"There is not much to be hoped for, Mother Colas; he has been so imprudent as to sing; but do not scold him, do not be harsh with him, have courage. If Jacques complains too much, send for me by a neighbor. Adieu!"

The doctor called his companion, and returned toward the path.

"That little peasant is consumptive?" said Genestas to him.

"*Mon Dieu,* yes!" replied Benassis. "Unless nature provides a miracle, science cannot save him. Our professors, of the *Ecole de Médecine* of Paris, frequently spoke to us of the phenomenon of which you have just been a witness. Certain maladies of this kind produce in the organs of the voice alterations which momentarily give to invalids the faculty of emitting notes the perfection of which cannot be equalled by any virtuoso.—I have made you pass a melancholy day, monsieur," said the doctor, when he was again in the saddle. "Everywhere suffering, and everywhere death, but everywhere also

resignation. The country people all die philosophically: they suffer, are silent, and take to their beds after the manner of the animals. But let us speak no more of death, and quicken the pace of our horses,—we must arrive before nightfall in the town, so that you may see the new quarter."

"And there is a fire somewhere," said Genestas, pointing to a spot on the mountain where flames might be seen arising.

"That fire is not dangerous. Our lime-burner is doubtless preparing a kiln of lime. This new industry utilizes our heaths."

The report of a gun was suddenly heard; Benassis uttered an involuntary exclamation, and said, impatiently:

"If that is Butifer, we shall see soon which of us two is the stronger."

"It was fired there," said Genestas, indicating a wood of beech-trees situated above them, on the mountain. "Yes, up there; you can trust to an old soldier's ear."

"Let us go there immediately!" exclaimed Benassis, who, aiming in a straight line for the little wood, made his horse fly over the ditches and the fields as if it were a steeple-chase, so much did he desire to surprise the shooter in the very act.

"The man whom you are looking for is running away," cried Genestas, who was following him with difficulty.

Benassis wheeled his horse quickly, returned on his steps, and the man whom he was looking for

presently showed himself on top of a steep rock, a hundred feet above the two horsemen.

"Butifer," cried Benassis, seeing the long gun which he carried, "come down!"

Butifer recognized the doctor, and replied by a sign, respectfully friendly, which promised perfect obedience.

"I can imagine," said Genestas, "that a man under the impulse of fear or of some violent emotion might be able to climb up that point of rock; but how is he going to get down?"

"I am not anxious about him," replied Benassis, "the goats might be jealous of that rascal. You will see."

Accustomed to judge of the intrinsic value of men by the events of war, the commandant admired the singular quickness, the admirable security of Butifer's movements while he was descending the declivities of the rock to the summit of which he had so courageously attained. The slender and vigorous body of the hunter kept his equilibrium gracefully in every position which the steepness of the road obliged him to take; he put his foot on a point of rock more quietly than he would have set it on a floor, so certain did he seem of being able to maintain himself at need. He managed his long gun as if he had only a cane in his hand.

Butifer was a young man, of medium height, but dry, thin, and nervous, whose virile beauty struck Genestas when he saw him near to him. He evidently belonged to that class of smugglers who carry

on their trade without violence, and employ only shrewdness and patience to defraud the exchequer. He had a masculine countenance, browned by the sun. His eyes, of a clear yellow, sparkled like those of an eagle, to the beak of which his thin nose, slightly curved at the end, had much resemblance. His cheeks were covered with down; his mouth, red, partly opened, revealed his teeth of a dazzling whiteness. His beard, his moustache, his reddish whiskers, which he allowed to grow, and which curled naturally, enhanced still more the virile and indomitable expression of his countenance. In him, everything was strength. The muscles of his hand, continually exercised, had a curious firmness and largeness. His chest was wide and deep, and on his forehead shone an untamed intelligence. He had the intrepid and resolute, though quiet, air of a man accustomed to risk his life, and who has so often proved his bodily or intellectual power in perils of every kind that he no longer has any doubts of himself. Clothed in a blouse torn by the thorns, he wore on his feet leathern sandals attached by eel-skin lacings. Pantaloons of blue canvas, pieced and slashed, allowed his legs to be seen, red, fine, wiry, and nervous as those of a deer.

"This is the man who in bygone days fired at me once," said Benassis to the commandant, in a low voice. "If, now, I should evince a desire to be rid of anyone, he would kill him without hesitation. Butifer," he went on, addressing the poacher, "I

believed you truly a man of honor, and I gave my word, because I had yours. My promise to the procureur du roi at Grenoble was based upon your oath to hunt no more, to become a respectable man, careful and industrious. It was you who just now fired that shot, and you are on the property of the Comte de Labranchoir. Aha! what if his gamekeeper had heard you, unlucky one? Fortunately for you, I will draw up no *procès-verbal;* you would be guilty of a second offence, and you have no right to carry arms! I left you your gun in consideration of your attachment to that arm."

"It is a fine one," said the commandant, recognizing a duck-gun of Saint-Etienne.

The smuggler looked up toward Genestas as if to thank him for this approbation.

"Butifer," continued Benassis, "your conscience should reproach you. If you take to your old trade again, you will find yourself once more in a park enclosed with walls; no protection will then be able to save you from the galleys; you will be marked, branded. You will bring me your gun this very evening. I will keep it for you."

Butifer clasped the barrel of his weapon with a convulsive movement.

"You are right, monsieur le maire," he said. "I am wrong, I have broken my ban, I am a dog. My gun should go to you, but you will have my inheritance in taking it from me. The last shot which my mother's child will fire will reach my brain.—What would you have! I have done what

you wished, I kept quiet during the winter; but, in the spring, the sap has started. I do not know how to work, I have not the heart to spend my life in fattening chickens; I can neither bend my back to dig around vegetables, nor flog the air in driving a cart, nor stop to rub a horse's back in a stable; must one, then, starve to death? I only see clearly up there," he continued after a pause, pointing to the mountains. "I have been there for a week. I saw a chamois, and the chamois is there," he said, indicating the top of the rock, "he is at your service! My good Monsieur Benassis, leave me my gun. Listen, on the word of Butifer! I will leave the commune and I will go to the Alps, where the chamois hunters will not say anything to me; quite the contrary, they will receive me with pleasure, and I shall die there at the bottom of some glacier. See, now, to speak frankly, I would rather spend a year or two living thus, among the heights, without meeting either government, or custom-house officer, or gamekeeper, or procureur du roi, than to grovel a hundred years in your bog. There will be no one but you whom I shall regret, the others drive me crazy! Although you are in the right, at least you do not exterminate people—"

"And Louise?" said Benassis to him.

Butifer stood thoughtful.

"Eh! my lad," said Genestas, "learn to read, to write, come to my regiment, mount a horse, become a carabineer. If once the boot-and-saddle should sound for a somewhat decent war, you would see

that the good God had made you to live in the midst of cannon, of balls, of battles, and you would become a general."

"Yes, if Napoléon had returned," replied Butifer.

"You know our agreement?" said the doctor to him. "On the second infraction, you promised me to become a soldier. I give you six months to learn to write and to read; then I will find some son of a family whose place you can take."

Butifer looked at the mountains.

"Oh! you will not go to the Alps," exclaimed Benassis. "A man like you, a man of honor, full of great qualities, should serve his country, command a brigade, and not die at the tail of a chamois. The life which you are leading will conduct you straight to the bagnio. Your excessive labors compel you to take long repose; in the end, you will contract the habits of an idle life, which will destroy in you all ideas of order, which will accustom you to abuse your strength, to punish yourself, and I wish, in spite of yourself, to set you on a good road."

"I shall then have to burst with weariness and dulness? I suffocate when I am in a city. I cannot stay longer than one day in Grenoble when I take Louise there—"

"We have all of us inclinations, which we must know how to resist, or render useful to our neighbors. But it is late, I am in a hurry, you will come to see me to-morrow, bringing me your gun; we will talk this all over, my son. Adieu! Sell your chamois in Grenoble."

The two horsemen rode away.

"That is what I call a man," said Genestas.

"A man in a bad way," replied Benassis. "But what is to be done? You heard him. Is it not deplorable to see such fine qualities wasted? If an enemy should invade France, Butifer, at the head of a hundred young men, would stop a division in the Maurienne for a month; but, in times of peace, he can only display his energy in situations in which the laws are defied. He requires some power or other to vanquish; when he is not risking his life, he is struggling against society, he aids the smugglers. That rascal crosses the Rhône, alone in a little boat, to carry shoes into Savoy; he takes refuge with his burden on an inaccessible peak, where he can remain two days, living on crusts of bread. In short, he loves danger as another loves slumber. Through tasting the pleasures which are given by extreme sensations, he has come to place himself outside of ordinary life. For my part, I do not wish that, in following the gradual decline of an evil life, such a man should become a brigand and die on a scaffold. But do you see, captain, how our town shows itself?"

Genestas perceived in the distance a large circular place planted with trees, in the middle of which was a fountain surrounded by poplars. This place was enclosed by a sloping embankment on which were three rows of different trees,—first, acacias, then Japanese varnish-trees, and at the top of the terrace, young elms.

"That is the field on which our fair is held," said Benassis. "Then the Grande-Rue begins with the two fine houses of which I have spoken to you, that of the justice of the peace and that of the notary."

They then entered a large street carefully paved with round stones, on each side of which were some hundred new houses, almost all of them separated by gardens. The church, whose portal furnished a handsome end to the perspective, terminated this street, midway in which two others were also newly laid out, with several houses already built upon them. The mayor's office, situated on the public place of the church, was opposite to the curate's house. As Benassis rode down this street, women, children, and men, whose day's work was ended, came out of their doors; some took off their caps to him, others said good-day to him, the little children uttered cries and danced around his horse, as if the good nature of the animal was known to them as well as that of his master. It was a quiet joy, which, like all deep sentiments, had its peculiar modesty and its infectious attraction.

When he saw this welcome accorded to the doctor, Genestas came to the conclusion that the physician had been too modest in the manner in which, the evening before, he had spoken of the affection which the inhabitants of the canton bore to him. It was, indeed, the most gentle of royalties, that of which the titles are engraved in the hearts of the subjects, a true royalty, moreover. However powerful may be the rays of the glory or of the power which a man

enjoys, his soul soon comes to estimate justly the feelings which any external action procures for him, and he quickly perceives his real nothingness in finding no change, nothing new, nothing greater, in the exercise of his physical powers. The kings, though they possessed the whole earth, are condemned, like all other men, to live in a little circle to the laws of which they submit, and their happiness depends upon the personal impressions which they receive. Now, Benassis is met everywhere in the canton with obedience and friendship only.

III

THE NAPOLEON OF THE PEOPLE

"You have come, then, monsieur!" exclaimed Jacquotte. "It is a long time that these messieurs have been waiting for you. It is always this way. You make me spoil my dinner when it should be particularly good. Now, everything is rotten with cooking—"

"Well, here we are," replied Benassis, smiling.

The two horsemen dismounted and went into the salon, where were assembled the guests invited by the doctor.

"Messieurs," said he, taking Genestas by the hand, "I have the honor to present to you Monsieur Bluteau, captain in the regiment of cavalry in garrison at Grenoble, an old soldier who has promised me to remain some time among us."

Then addressing himself to Genestas, he indicated to him a tall, spare man, with gray hair and clothed in black.

"Monsieur," he said to him, "is Monsieur Dufau, the justice of the peace, of whom I have already spoken to you, and who has so greatly contributed to the prosperity of the commune. Monsieur," he

resumed, presenting him to a thin, pale young man, of medium stature, also dressed in black, and who wore glasses, "Monsieur is Monsieur Tonnelet, the son-in-law of Monsieur Gravier, and the first notary established in our town."

Then turning toward a stout man, half peasant, half bourgeois, with a coarse, pimpled face, but one full of good humor:

"Monsieur," said he, continuing, "is my worthy deputy, Monsieur Cambon, the lumber merchant to whom I owe the friendly confidence which the inhabitants grant me. He is one of the creators of the road which you have admired. I have no need," added Benassis, indicating the curé, "to tell you the profession of monsieur. You see a man whom no one can help loving."

The face of the priest attracted the soldier's attention by its expression of a moral beauty the charm of which was irresistible. At first glance, Monsieur Janvier's countenance might seem uncouth, so harsh and severe were its lines. His slight figure, his emaciation, his attitude, revealed great physical weakness; but his countenance, always placid, attested the profound interior peace of the Christian and the strength which arises from the chastity of the soul. His eyes, in which the heavens seemed to be reflected, betrayed that inextinguishable flame of charity which consumed his heart. His gestures, rare but natural, were those of a modest man; his movements had the modest simplicity of those of young girls. The sight of him

inspired respect, and the vague desire of entering into his intimacy.

"Ah! monsieur le maire!—" he said, bowing, as if to escape the eulogy which Benassis had pronounced upon him.

The sound of his voice stirred the heart of the commandant, who was thrown into a reverie almost religious by the few insignificant words uttered by this unknown priest.

"Messieurs," said Jacquotte, coming into the middle of the salon and standing there, her fist on her hip, "your soup is on the table."

Upon the invitation of Benassis, who called each one in his turn to avoid the etiquette of precedence, the five guests of the physician passed into the dining-room and took their seats at the table, after having heard the *Benedicite*, which the curé pronounced without emphasis and in a low voice. The table was covered with a cloth of that damask linen invented under Henri IV. by the brothers Graindorge, skilful manufacturers, who have given their name to this thick tissue so well known to housekeepers. This linen was dazzling in whiteness and smelt of the thyme which Jacquotte used in her laundry. The service was of white faïence with blue borders, in perfect preservation. The carafes had that antique octagonal form which the provinces alone preserve in our day. The handles of the knives, all in carved horn, represented curious figures.

In examining these objects, of a luxury ancient and yet almost new, each one found them in

harmony with the cheerfulness and frankness of the master of the house. The attention of Genestas was arrested for a moment by the cover of the soup tureen which was crowned by vegetables in relief, very well colored, in the manner of Bernard Palissy, a celebrated artist of the sixteenth century. This company did not want for originality. The vigorous heads of Benassis and Genestas contrasted admirably with the apostolic head of Monsieur Janvier; in the same manner as the aging faces of the justice of the peace and the deputy mayor set off the youthful countenance of the notary. Society seemed to be represented by these diverse physiognomies, on which were equally depicted inward contentment, satisfaction with the present, and faith in the future. Monsieur Tonnelet and Monsieur Janvier only, not far advanced in life, loved to scrutinize future events, which they felt appertained to them, whilst the other guests naturally preferred to bring the conversation to the past; but all of them gravely surveyed human affairs, and their opinions reflected a double tint of melancholy,—one had the paleness of the evening twilights, the souvenir, almost effaced, of joys that would never be born again; the other, like the dawn, gave hopes of a beautiful day.

"You must have had a very fatiguing day, monsieur le curé?" said Monsieur Cambon.

"Yes, monsieur," replied Monsieur Janvier; "the burial of the poor cretin and that of Father Pelletier took place at different hours."

"We shall now be able to demolish the ruins of the old village," said Benassis to his colleague. "These clearings off of the houses will give us at least an arpent of meadow-land; and the commune will gain, moreover, the hundred francs which the support of Chautard, the cretin, cost us."

"We should allow these hundred francs for three years for the construction of a one-arched bridge on the road down there, to cross the large stream," said Monsieur Cambon. "The people of the town and of the valley have adopted the custom of crossing the land of Jean-François Pastoureau, and will, in the end, injure it in such a manner as to cause much loss to that poor good fellow."

"Certainly," said the justice of the peace, "that money could not be put to a better use. In my opinion, the abuse of footpaths is one of the greatest plagues in the country. The tenth of the cases brought before the courts of the peace are caused by unjust obligations of land-owners. The rights of property are thus attacked, almost with impunity, in very many communes. The respect for property and respect for the law are two sentiments too often misunderstood in France, and which it is very necessary to propagate. It seems to be dishonoring to a great many people to lend any assistance to the law, and the '*Go and get yourself hanged elsewhere!*' a proverbial phrase which seems to be dictated by a sentiment of praiseworthy generosity, is at bottom only a hypocritical formula which serves to veil our selfishness. Let us admit it, we are lacking in

patriotism! The true patriot is the citizen sufficiently penetrated with the importance of the laws to cause them to be executed, even at his own risks and peril. To allow a malefactor to go in peace, is not that to render ourselves guilty of his future crimes?"

"All things are related to each other," said Benassis. "If the mayors kept their roads better, there would not be so many footpaths. Then, if the municipal councillors were better informed, they would sustain the proprietor and the mayor when these were opposed to the establishment of an unjust obligation, like this; all would make the ignorant people comprehend that the château, the field, the thatched cottage, the tree, are equally sacred, and that the RIGHT is neither augmented nor enfeebled by the differing values of property. But such ameliorations cannot be obtained quickly; they are related principally to the morality of the population, which we cannot reform completely without the efficacious intervention of the curés. This is not addressed to you, Monsieur Janvier."

"Neither do I take it for myself," replied the curé, laughing. "Have I not endeavored to make the dogmas of the Catholic religion coincide with your administrative views? Thus I have often tried, in my pastoral instructions regarding theft, to inculcate in the inhabitants of the parish the same ideas which you have just set forth concerning the right. In fact, God does not estimate the theft according to the value of the thing stolen, he judges the thief. Such was the meaning of the parables

which I have endeavored to adapt to the intelligence of my parishioners."

"You have succeeded, monsieur le curé," said Cambon. "I am able to judge of the changes which you have wrought in their minds by comparing the present state of the commune with its former condition. It is certain that there are but few cantons in which the workmen are as scrupulous as are our own concerning the fixed hours of labor. The cattle are well looked after, and do no damage unless accidentally. The woods are respected. In short, you have caused our peasants to understand very well that the leisure of the rich is the recompense of an economical and industrious life."

"Then," said Genestas, "you should be sufficiently well content with your foot-soldiers, monsieur le curé?"

"Monsieur le capitaine," replied the priest, "it is not worth while to expect to find angels anywhere, here below. Everywhere where there is poverty there is suffering. Suffering and poverty are living forces which have their abuses, as power has its own. When the peasants have walked two leagues to go to their work, and are returning very tired in the evening, if they see the hunters crossing the fields and the meadows in order to reach their dinner-table sooner, do you believe that they will have any scruples in imitating them? Among those who thus beat down the path of which these messieurs were just complaining, which is the delinquent, he who works or he who amuses himself?

To-day, the rich and the poor give us as much trouble the one as the other. Faith, like power, should always descend from the heights, either heavenly or social; and certainly, in our days, the educated classes have less faith than the people, to whom God has promised heaven in recompense of their ills patiently supported.

"While always submitting to the ecclesiastical discipline and to the ideas of my superiors, I think that, for a long time to come, we should be less exacting concerning questions of worship, and endeavor to reanimate the religious sentiment in the heart of the middle regions of the social body, there where they discuss Christianity instead of practising its precepts. The philosophism of the rich has been a very fatal example for the poor, and has caused too long interregnums in the kingdom of God. Whatever we may gain to-day over our flock depends entirely upon our personal influence; is it not a misfortune that the religious faith of a commune should be due to the consideration which a man obtains in it? When Christianity shall have fertilized anew the social order, by impregnating all classes with its conservative doctrines, its worship will no longer be called in question. The worship of a religion is its outward form, societies subsist only by their form. To you, the flags; to us, the cross—"

"Monsieur le curé, I should much like to know," said Genestas, interrupting Monsieur Janvier, "why you prevent these poor people from amusing themselves by dancing on Sundays?"

"Monsieur le capitaine," replied the curé, "we do not hate the dance in itself; we proscribe it as one cause of the immorality which troubles the peace and corrupts the manners of the country. To purify the family spirit, to maintain the sanctity of its bonds, is not that to cut down the evil at its roots?"

"I am aware," said Monsieur Tonnelet, "that some disorders are committed in every canton, but in ours they are becoming rare. If a number of our peasants have no great scruples about taking from a neighbor a furrow of earth in ploughing, or about going to cut some osiers on the land of another when they need them, these are peccadillos in comparison with the sins of the people of the cities. Therefore, I consider the peasants of this valley to be very religious."

"Oh! religious," said the curé, smiling; "fanaticism is not to be feared here."

"But, monsieur le curé," objected Cambon, "if the townspeople went to mass every morning, if they confessed to you every week, it would be difficult to cultivate the fields, and three priests would not suffice for the task—"

"Monsieur," replied the curé, "to work is to pray. Practical action implies the knowledge of the religious principles which give life to societies."

"And what do you make, then, of patriotism?" asked Genestas.

"Patriotism," replied the curé, gravely, "inspires only passing sentiments, religion renders them

durable. Patriotism is a momentary forgetfulness of the personal interest, whilst Christianity is a complete system of opposition to the depraved tendencies of mankind."

"However, monsieur, during the wars of the Revolution, patriotism—"

"Yes, during the Revolution we did marvels," said Benassis, interrupting Genestas; "but twenty years later, in 1814, our patriotism was already dead; whilst France and Europe threw themselves upon Asia a dozen times in a hundred years, urged by a religious sentiment."

"Perhaps," said the justice of the peace, "it is easy to come to an agreement concerning the material interests which give rise to the combats of people against people; whilst the wars undertaken to maintain dogmas, the object of which is never precisely defined, are necessarily interminable."

"Well, monsieur, are you not serving the fish?" said Jacquotte, who, aided by Nicolle, had carried away the plates.

Faithful to her usual custom, the cook brought in each dish, one after the other, a custom which has the inconvenience of obliging the gourmands to eat a great deal, and of causing the best things to be neglected by the temperate ones whose appetite is satisfied by the first courses.

"Oh! monsieur," said the priest to the justice of the peace, "how can you assert that the wars of religion have no precise aim? Formerly, religion was a bond so powerful in all societies that the

material interests could not be separated from the religious questions. Hence every soldier knew very well for what he fought—"

"If there has been so much fighting for religion," said Genestas, "it must be that God has built the edifice very imperfectly. Should not a divine institution strike all men by its characteristics of truth?"

All the guests looked at the curé.

"Messieurs," said Monsieur Janvier, "religion is felt, and is not defined. We are judges neither of the means nor of the end of the All-Powerful."

"Then, according to you, it is necessary to believe in all your salaams?" said Genestas, with the cheerful irreverence of a soldier who has never thought of God.

"Monsieur," replied the priest, gravely, "the Catholic religion puts an end, better than any other, to all human anxieties; but if it should not be so, I would ask you what you risk in believing in its truths?"

"Not much," said Genestas.

"Well, what do you not risk in not believing at all? But, monsieur, let us speak of the terrestrial interests which touch you the nearest. See how the finger of God is strongly impressed upon human things by touching them through the hand of his vicar. Men have lost a great deal by departing from the paths traced by Christianity. The Church, of which few people think to read the history, and which is judged by certain erroneous opinions designedly spread among the people, has offered

the perfect model of government which men are seeking to establish to-day. The principle of election has made of it for a long time a great political power. There was not, formerly, a single religious institution which was not based upon liberty, upon equality. All possible means co-operated in this work. The principal of a college, the abbé, the bishop, the general of the order, the Pope, were then chosen conscientiously, according to the needs of the Church; they expressed its idea,—therefore the most blind obedience was due them. I will not dwell upon the social benefits of this idea which has made the modern nations, inspired so many poems, cathedrals, statues, paintings, and musical compositions, to call your attention only to the fact that your popular elections, the jury, and the two Chambers have taken their root in the provincial and œcumenical councils, in the episcopate and the college of cardinals; with this difference nearly, that the present philosophical conceptions of civilization seem to me to pale before the sublime and divine idea of the Catholic communion, an image of a universal social communion, accomplished by the Word and by the act, reunited in the religious dogma. It will be difficult for the new political systems, however perfect they may be supposed, to produce anew those marvels known in the ages in which the Church sustained human intelligence."

"Why?" said Genestas.

"In the first place, because the election, in order to become a principle, demands among the electors

an absolute equality,—they should be *equal quantities*, to make use of a geometrical expression, something which modern politics will never obtain. Then, the great things of social existence are produced only by the power of sentiments, which alone can bring men together, and the modern philosophism has founded the laws on the personal interest, which tends to isolate them. Formerly, more than to-day, there were to be met with, among the nations, men generously animated by a maternal sense of the unrecognized rights, the sufferings of the masses. Thus the priest, a child of the middle classes, was opposed to the material force, and he defended the people against their enemies. The Church has acquired territorial possessions, and her temporal interests, which would seem to necessarily consolidate her, have ended by enfeebling her action. In fact, when the priest has privileged property, he seems to be an oppressor; when the State pays him, he is a functionary, he owes his time, his heart, his life; the citizens make his virtues his duty, and his benevolence, withered in the principle of free will, dries up in his heart. But, when the priest is poor, when he is a priest voluntarily, without any other support than God, without other fortune than the heart of the faithful, he becomes again the missionary to America, he institutes himself an apostle, he is the prince of good. In short, he reigns only by destitution and he succumbs through opulence."

Monsieur Janvier had secured the general attention. The guests were silent while reflecting upon

these words so novel in the mouth of a simple curé.

"Monsieur Janvier, in the midst of the truths which you have expressed, there is to be met with a grave error," said Benassis. "I do not like, as you know, to discuss the general interests brought into question by writers and by the modern authorities. In my opinion, a man who conceives a political system should, if he feel in himself the strength to apply it, be silent, seize the power and act; but, if he remain in the happy obscurity of a simple citizen, is it not folly to endeavor to convert the masses only by individual discussions? Nevertheless, I am going to combat you, my dear pastor, because here I am addressing myself to worthy men, accustomed to put their lights together in order to seek the truth in everything. My thoughts may appear strange to you, but they are the fruit of the reflections which have been inspired in me by the catastrophes of our last forty years.

"Universal suffrage, which is demanded to-day by those belonging to the opposition which is called constitutional, was an excellent principle in the Church, because, as you have just observed, dear pastor, the individuals there were all informed, disciplined by the religious sentiment, imbued with the same system, knowing very well what they wished and whither they were going. But the triumph of the ideas in aid of which modern liberalism imprudently makes war on the prosperous government of the Bourbons would be the ruin of France and of the liberals themselves. The chiefs of the Left

know it well. For them, this contest is a simple question of power. If, which God forbid, the bourgeoisie, under the banners of the opposition, should succeed in beating down the social superiorities against which their vanity protests, this triumph would be immediately followed by a combat sustained by the bourgeoisie against the people, which, later, would see in them a sort of nobility, rather mean, it is true, but of which the fortunes and the privileges would be to them all the more odious that they felt them so much the nearer. In this combat, society, I do not say the nation, would perish again, because the triumph—always momentary—of the suffering masses implies the greatest disorders. This combat would be furious, without truce, for it would arise from the discord, instinctive or acquired, between the electors, of whom the portion the least enlightened but the most numerous would get the better of their social superiors in a system in which suffrages count and are not weighed.

"It follows from this that a government is never more strongly organized, consequently more perfect, than when it is established for the defence of a more restricted privilege. That which I call at this moment a *privilege* is not one of those rights formerly unjustly conceded to certain persons to the detriment of all; no, it expresses more particularly that social circle to which the evolutions of power are restricted. Power is, in some sort, the heart of a State. Now, in all her creations, Nature has restrained the vital principle in order to give it more elasticity,—thus it

is with the body politic. I will explain my idea by examples. We will admit in France a hundred peers, they will cause only a hundred irritations. Abolish the peerage, all the wealthy classes become privileged; instead of a hundred, you will have ten thousand of them, and you will have enlarged the wound of social inequalities. In fact, for the people, the right of living without working alone constitutes a privilege. In their eyes, he who consumes without producing is a spoiler. They insist upon visible works, and take no account of intellectual productions, which most enrich them. Therefore, in multiplying the irritations, you extend the combat to all points of the social body, instead of restraining it within a narrow circle. When the attack and the resistance are general, the ruin of a country is imminent. There will always be fewer rich than poor; hence the victory will be to the latter as soon as the contest becomes material. History comes to the support of my principle. The Roman republic owed the conquest of the world to the constitution of the senatorial privilege. The senate maintained fixed the idea of power. But, when the equestrian order and the new men had extended the action of the government by enlarging the patriciate, the public State was lost. In spite of Sylla, and after Cæsar, Tiberius made of it the Roman empire, a system in which the power, being concentrated in the hands of a single man, gave several centuries more to this great domination. The emperor was no longer in Rome when the Eternal City fell before the barbarians.

"When our soil was conquered, the Franks, who divided it among themselves, invented the feudal privilege in order to guarantee to themselves their individual possessions. The hundred or the thousand chiefs who possessed the country established their institutions with the object of defending the rights acquired by conquest. Thus feudalism endured so long as the privilege was restricted. But, when the *men of this nation*, the true translation of the word 'gentlemen,' instead of being five hundred, were fifty thousand, there was a revolution. Too much extended, the action of their power was without elasticity or force, and found itself, moreover, without defence against the enfranchisement of money and of thought, which it had not foreseen. Then, the triumph of the bourgeoisie over the monarchical system having for its object the augmentation in the eyes of the people of the number of the privileged, the triumph of the people over the bourgeoisie would be the inevitable effect of this change. If this perturbation comes to pass, it will have for its means of action the right of suffrage, extended without limit to the masses. Who votes, discusses. Powers discussed do not exist. Can you imagine a society without power? No. Well, who says power, says strength. Strength should repose upon the *things determined*.

"Such are the reasons which have led me to think that the principle of election is one of the most fatal to the existence of modern governments. Certainly, I think I have sufficiently well proven my attachment

to the poor and suffering class. I cannot be accused of wishing its misfortune; but, while still admiring the industrious life which it leads, sublime in patience and in resignation, I declare it to be incapable of participating in the government. The proletarians seem to me to be the minors of a nation, and should always remain in a state of tutelage. Thus, in my opinion, messieurs, the word *election* is likely to cause as much damage as have done the words *conscience* and *liberty*, ill comprehended, ill defined, and thrown to the people as symbols of revolt and orders for destruction. The tutelage of the masses seems to me, then, to be a thing just and necessary to the sustaining of society."

"This system is so directly at variance with all our ideas of to-day, that we have somewhat the right to ask you your reasons," said Genestas, interrupting the doctor.

"Willingly, captain."

"What is it, then, that our master is saying?" exclaimed Jacquotte, as she re-entered her kitchen. "There is that poor dear man advising them to crush the people! and they are listening to him—"

"I should never have thought that of Monsieur Benassis," replied Nicolle.

"If I advocate vigorous laws to repress the ignorant masses," resumed the doctor, after a slight pause, "I desire that the social system should have a weak and yielding network through which may rise above the crowd everyone who wills it and who is conscious of the faculties which will elevate him

toward the superior classes. All power tends to its own preservation. In order to live, to-day as formerly, governments should assimilate the strong men, taking them wherever they are to be found, in order to make of them their defenders, and to take away from the masses the energetic individuals who cause them to rise in revolt. By offering to public ambition careers at once arduous and easy, arduous to the feeble and vacillating, easy to the determined wills, a State forestalls the revolutions which are caused by the restrictions placed upon the rise of real superiority toward its own level. Our forty years of torment should have proved to a sensible man that eminence is a consequence of social order. It is of three kinds, and incontestable,—eminence of thought, political eminence, and eminence of fortune. Is this not the art, the power and the wealth, or, in other words, the principle, the means and the result?

"Now, as, supposing an even start, a *tabula rasa*, the social unities perfectly equalized, the births in the same proportion, and giving to each family an equal portion of land, you would very soon find again all the irregularities of fortune now existing, it results from this very evident truth that eminence of fortune, of thought, and of power is a fact to be reckoned with, a fact that the masses will always consider as oppressive, seeing privileges in rights the most justly acquired. The social contract, starting from this base, will be then a perpetual compact between those who possess against those who do

not possess. In accord with this principle, the laws will be made by those whom they profit, for they will necessarily have the instinct of their own preservation and foresee their own dangers. They are more interested in the tranquillity of the masses than are the masses themselves. The people require a happiness ready-made. In considering society from this point of view, if you view it in its entirety, you will soon come to recognize with me that the right of election should be exercised only by men who possess fortune, power, or intelligence, and you will also recognize that their representatives should have only extremely restricted functions.

"The legislator, messieurs, should be superior to his age. He verifies the tendency of the general errors, and specifies the points toward which the ideas of a nation tend; he labors, then, more for the future than for the present, more for the generation which is growing up than for that which is passing away. Now, if you call on the masses to make the laws, can the masses rise superior to themselves? No. The more faithfully the assembly represents the opinions of the crowd, the less understanding will it have of government, the less elevated will be its views, the less precise, the more vacillating will be its legislation, for the multitude is, in France especially, and will be always, only a multitude. Law carries with it a submission to rules; every rule is in opposition to natural customs, to the interests of the individual; will the masses support laws against themselves? No. The tendency of the

laws should frequently be contrary to the tendencies of manners. To mould the laws upon the general manners and customs, would that not be to give, in Spain, prizes of encouragement to religious intolerance, to slothfulness; in England, to the mercantile spirit; in Italy, to the love of the arts destined to express society, but which cannot be all of society; in Germany, to classifications of rank; in France, to the spirit of levity, to the sway of ideas, to the facility of dividing among ourselves into factions which have always rent us? What is it that has happened within the more than forty years since the electoral colleges began to lay their hands upon the laws?—we have forty thousand laws! A people who have forty thousand laws have no law. Can five hundred mediocre intelligences,—for a century has never more than a hundred great intelligences at its service,—can they have the strength to rise to these considerations? No. Men constantly issuing from five hundred different localities will never comprehend in the same manner the spirit of the law, and the law should be a unity. But I go further. Sooner or later, an assembly falls under the rule of one man, and, instead of having dynasties of kings, you have the changing and costly dynasties of prime ministers. At the end of all deliberations will be found Mirabeau, Danton, Robespierre, or Napoléon,—pro-consuls or an emperor.

"In fact, it requires a determinate force to lift a determinate weight; this force may be distributed over a greater or less number of levers; but the force

should be definitely proportioned to the weight,—here, the weight is the ignorant and suffering mass which constitutes the first layer of all societies. Power, being repressive in its nature, has need of a great concentration in order to oppose an equal resistance to the popular movement. This is the application of the principle which I have just developed in speaking to you of the restriction of the privilege of participating in the government. If you admit to this privilege men of talent, they will submit to this natural law and cause the country to submit to it; if you assemble mediocre men, they will be vanquished sooner or later by the superior genius,—the talented deputy is conscious of the right of the State, the mediocre deputy makes a bargain with power. In short, an assembly yields to an idea, as did the Convention during the Terror; to a power, as did the Corps Législatif under Napoléon; to a system, or to money, as to-day. The republican assembly, dreamed of by some intelligent minds, is impossible; those who wish for it are either dupes ready-made, or future tyrants. A deliberating assembly which discusses the dangers of a nation, when it is necessary to make it act, does not that seem to you ridiculous? That the people should have representatives charged with the duty of granting or refusing taxes, this is something just, which has existed in all times, under the most cruel tyrant as under the most gracious prince. Money is unseizable; taxation has, moreover, natural limits, beyond which a nation rises to refuse, or lies down to die. Should this body,

elective and changing according to the needs, like the ideas which it represents, set itself in opposition to yielding the obedience of all to a bad law, everything is well. But suppose that five hundred men, gathered from all the corners of an empire, should make a good law, would not that be an ill jest which the people would expiate sooner or later? They then change tyrants, that is all.

"Power, the law, should, then, be the work of one only, who, by the force of circumstances, is obliged to submit his actions constantly to the general approbation. But the restrictions which are applied to the exercise of power, whether of one man only, or of several, or of the multitude, can be found only in the religious institutions of a people. Religion is the sole counter-weight truly efficacious against the abuses of supreme power. If the religious sentiment perish in a nation, it becomes seditious through principle, and the prince transforms himself into a tyrant through necessity. The Chambers, which are interposed between the sovereign and his subjects, are only palliatives to these two tendencies. The assemblies, according to what I have just said, become accomplices either of the insurrection or of the tyranny. Nevertheless, the government of one man, toward which I incline, is not good of an absolute goodness; for political results will depend eternally upon manners and beliefs. If a nation has grown old, if philosophism and the spirit of controversy have corrupted it even to the marrow of its bones, that nation is drifting toward despotism,

notwithstanding all the forms of liberty; in the same manner that an intelligent people are nearly always able to find liberty under the forms of despotism. From all this there results the necessity of a great restriction in the electoral rights, the necessity of a strong authority, the necessity of a powerful religion which will render the rich the friend of the poor, and command from the poor an entire resignation.

"Finally, there is an urgent need of reducing the assemblies to the consideration only of questions of taxation and of the registry of the laws, in taking away from them the direct framing of them. I am aware that there are other ideas which exist in several heads. To-day, as formerly, there are to be met with minds that are eager to search for *the best*, and who would have societies more sagely organized than they actually are. But innovations which tend to bring about complete social overturnings have need of a universal sanction. Innovators should have patience. When I measure the time which was required for the establishment of Christianity, a moral revolution which was necessarily purely pacific, I shudder in contemplating the calamities of a revolution in material interests, and I conclude in favor of the maintenance of existing institutions. To each one his own opinion, Christianity has said; to each one his own field, has said the modern law. The modern law has come into harmony with Christianity. To each one his own opinion, is the consecration of the rights of intelligence; to each one his own field, is the consecration of property acquired by labor.

From this, our society. Nature has based human life upon the sentiment of individual conservation; social life is founded upon the personal interest.

"Such are, for me, the true political principles. By modifying these two egotistical sentiments by the consideration of a future life, religion tempers the harshness of the social contracts. Thus, God tempers the sufferings produced by the conflict of interests by the religious sentiment, which makes a virtue of forgetfulness of self, as He has moderated by unknown laws the clashing in the mechanism of His worlds. Christianity bids the poor to endure the rich; the rich, to soothe the miseries of the poor; for me, these few words are the essence of all laws, divine and human."

"I, who am not a statesman," said the notary, "I see in a sovereign the liquidator of a society which should remain in a constant condition of liquidation; he transmits to his successor actual effects equal in value to those he has received."

"I am not a statesman!" replied Benassis, quickly, interrupting the notary. "It requires only good sense to ameliorate the condition of a commune, of a canton, or of an arrondissement; when it comes to governing a department, talent is necessary; but these four administrative spheres offer limited horizons which ordinary perceptions may readily include; their interests are connected with the great movement of the State by visible bonds. In the higher region everything is enlarged, the eye of the statesman should survey the whole field from the

point of view which he occupies. While there is required, to produce much good in a department, in an arrondissement, in a canton or in a commune, only the foreseeing of the result of ten years of current affairs, there is required, as soon as it is a question of a nation, the foreseeing of its destinies, the measuring of them through the course of a century.

"The genius of a Colbert, of a Sully, is nothing if it be not based upon the will-power which makes Napoléons and Cromwells. A great minister, messieurs, is a great thought inscribed upon all the years of the age whose splendor and prosperity have been prepared by him. Constancy is the virtue which is most necessary for him. But, may we not say also that in all human affairs constancy is the highest expression of strength? For some time now, we have been seeing too many men who have only ministerial ideas, instead of having national ideas, for us not to admire as the true statesman him who offers us the very highest development of poetical human thought. To be able to see always beyond the present moment and in advance of destiny, to be above power and to remain in it only through a consciousness of his utility without any self-deception as to his own strength; to discard his passions and even all commonplace ambition in order to remain master of his faculties, to foresee, to will and to act incessantly; to make himself just and absolute, to maintain order on a large scale, to impose silence upon his heart and to listen

only to his intelligence; to be neither suspicious nor confident, neither doubting nor credulous, neither grateful nor ungrateful, neither unprepared for an event nor surprised by an idea; to live, in short, through the sentiment of the masses, and to dominate them always by extending the wings of his intelligence, the volume of his voice, and the penetration of his eye; in seeing, not the details, but the consequences of everything,—is not this to be a little greater than a man? Thus the names of these great and noble fathers of the nations should be held forever in popular remembrance."

There was a moment of silence, during which the guests looked at each other.

"Messieurs, you have said nothing of the army!" exclaimed Genestas. "The military organization seems to me to be the true type of all good civil society: the sword is the tutor of a people."

"Captain," replied the justice of the peace, laughing, "an old advocate has said that empires begin by the sword and finish by the inkstand; we are at the state of the inkstand."

"Now that we have regulated the fate of the world, messieurs, let us speak of other things. Come, captain, a glass of the wine of the Hermitage," exclaimed the doctor, laughing.

"Two, rather than one," said Genestas, extending his glass, "and I wish to drink them to your health, as to that of a man who does honor to the species."

"And whom we all cherish," said the curé in a voice full of mildness.

"Monsieur Janvier, do you then wish me to commit some sin of pride?"

"Monsieur le curé has said in a whisper what all the canton cries aloud," replied Cambon.

"Messieurs, I propose to you to conduct Monsieur Janvier home, taking a walk in the moonlight."

"Let us go," said the guests, preparing to accompany the curé.

"Come to my barn," said the doctor, taking Genestas by the arm, after having said good-night to the curé and to his other guests. "There, Captain Bluteau, you will hear talk of Napoléon. I have some gossips that ought to make Goguelat, our foot-soldier, gabble about this god of the people. Nicolle, my stable-boy, has put up a ladder for us to ascend to a window in the roof above the hay, to a place where we can see the whole scene. Believe me, come,—one of these gatherings is worth the trouble. This is not the first time that I have placed myself in the hay to listen to a soldier's story or some peasant's tale. But let us conceal ourselves well,—when these poor people see a stranger, they behave strangely and are no longer themselves."

"Well, my dear host," said Genestas, "have I not often made believe to sleep in order to listen to my horsemen, around the bivouac! Truly, I have never laughed at the Paris theatres as heartily as at a recital of the rout at Moscow, retailed in burlesque by an old quatermaster to some conscripts who were afraid of war. He said that the French army *did* in its sheets, that everything was drunk iced, that

the dead stopped themselves in the road, that White Russia was seen, that the horses were curried with your teeth, that those who liked to skate were very well treated, that the amateurs of frozen meats were satiated, that the women were generally cold, and that the only thing which had been sensibly disagreeable was not to have hot water for shaving—In short, he retailed such comic broad stories that an old quartermaster who had had his nose frozen, and who was called *Nezrestant*,* laughed at them himself."

"Hist!" said Benassis, "here we are; I will go in first, follow me."

Both of them mounted the ladder and concealed themselves in the hay, without having been heard by the country people over whose heads they found themselves seated in such a manner as to enable them to see them very well. Gathered in little groups around three or four candles, some of the women were sewing, others were spinning; several were quite idle, their necks stretched, their heads and eyes turned toward an old peasant who was relating a story. The greater number of the men stood, or reclined upon bundles of hay. These groups, perfectly silent, were scarcely lit up by the wavering beams of some candles enclosed in glass globes full of water which concentrated the light in rays, in which the workwomen sat. The extent of the barn, the upper part of which remained black and sombre, enfeebled still more these lights, which

* *Nezrestant*,—literally, "nose remaining,"—character of romance.

colored the heads unequally, producing picturesque effects of chiaro-oscuro. Here, shone the brown forehead and the clear eyes of a curious young peasant girl; there, the bands of light cut out the rough foreheads of some old men and fantastically outlined their worn or discolored garments. All these individuals, attentive and varied in their attitudes, expressed on their motionless countenances the completeness with which they abandoned their intelligences to the narrator. It was a curious picture in which was strongly displayed the very great influence exercised by poetry on all minds. In requiring from his story-teller a marvellousness always simple, or the impossible almost credible, does not the peasant show himself to be appreciative of the purest poetry?

"—Although this house had a forbidding appearance," the peasant was saying at the moment when the two new hearers took their places to listen, "the poor humpbacked woman was so fatigued from having carried her hemp to the market that she entered it, compelled to do so also by the night which had fallen. All that she asked was to sleep there; for, as to food, she drew a crust from her wallet and ate it. So that the hostess, who was then the wife of the brigands, knowing nothing of what they had agreed to do during the night, welcomed the humpback and conducted her upstairs, without any light. My humpback threw herself upon an old bed, said her prayers, thought of her hemp, and disposed herself for sleep. But, before she had fallen asleep,

she heard a noise and saw two men enter carrying a lantern; each of them held a knife,—she was seized with fear, for, you see, in those times, the seigneurs loved pâtés of human flesh so much that they were made for them. But, as the little old woman's skin was quite like horn, she reassured herself, thinking that she would be considered a very poor food. The two men pass before the humpback, come to a bed which was in that great room, and in which had been put the monsieur with a great valise, who then was considered a *negromancer*. The taller of the two men lifts the lantern, taking hold of the feet of the monsieur; the little one, he who had pretended to be drunk, seizes him by the head and neatly cuts his throat with one stroke, *croc!* Then they leave there the body and the head, all bloody, rob the valise and go downstairs. Here was our woman in a fine embarrassment! She thinks at first of going away without anyone's knowledge, not knowing as yet that Providence had brought her here in order to give glory to God and cause the crime to be punished. She was afraid, and when one is afraid, one does not worry about anything else in the world. But the hostess, who had asked the brigands about the humpbacked woman, frightens them, and they go softly up the little wooden staircase again. The poor humpback is paralyzed with fear, and hears them disputing in a whisper.

"'I tell you to kill her.'

"'Not necessary to kill her.'

"'Kill her!'

"'No!'

"They come in. My woman, who was not stupid, closes her eyes and pretends that she is asleep. She sets herself to sleeping like a child, her hand on her heart, and breathing like one of the cherubim. He who had the lantern opens it, puts the light in the eye of the old woman asleep, and my woman does not even frown, so much is she afraid for her neck.

"'You see very well that she is sleeping like a top,' says the tall man.

"'They are so sly, these old women,' replies the little one. 'I am going to kill her, we shall be more easy. Moreover, we will salt her down, and we will give her to our hogs to eat.'

"When she hears this proposition, my old woman does not budge.

"'Oh! well, she is asleep!' says the little ruffian, on seeing that the humpback had not budged.

"This was the way the old woman saved herself. And it may very well be said that she was courageous. Certainly there are here plenty of young girls who would not have the respiration of one of the cherubim on hearing talk of the hogs.—The two brigands then lift up the dead man, roll him up in his sheets, and throw him into the little court, where the old woman hears the pigs come up, grunting *Hon! Hon!* to eat him.

"Well, then, the next morning," resumed the narrator after a pause, "the woman goes away, paying two sous for her night's lodging. She takes

up her wallet, pretends that nothing had happened, asks the news of the neighborhood, goes out in peace, and wants to run. Not at all! fear cuts off her legs, very fortunately for her. Hear why. She had scarcely made a half of a quarter of a league, when she sees one of the brigands coming, one who had followed her shrewdly to make certain that she had seen nothing. She guesses that, and sits down on a stone.

"'What is the matter with you, my good woman?' says the little one to her, for it was the little one, the more malicious of the two, who was watching her.

"'Ah! my good man,' she replies, 'my wallet is so heavy and I am so tired, that I shall have need of the arm of an honest man—Do you see, this artful one!—to reach my poor dwelling.'

"Thereupon, the brigand offers to accompany her. She accepts. The man takes her arm to see if she is afraid. Ah, well! this woman does not tremble at all, and walks along peacefully. And then you might hear them both talking agriculture and the best way of growing hemp, quite calmly, all the way to the suburb of the city where the humpback lived and where the brigand left her, for fear of meeting some one of the officers of justice. The woman arrives at her own house at the hour of noon and waits for her husband, reflecting upon the events of her journey and of the night. The hemp-grower came in toward evening. He was hungry; something must be gotten for him to eat. Then, all

the while she is greasing her frying-pan so that she can fry him something, she tells him how she has sold her hemp, gabbling after the manner of women; but she says nothing about the pigs, nor of the monsieur, killed, robbed, eaten. Then she burns out her pan to clean it; takes it up, goes to wipe it out, finds it full of blood.

"'What did you put in it?' she says to her husband.

"'Nothing,' he replies.

"She thinks she has some woman's crotchet in her head, and puts her pan back on the fire.—*Pouf!* a head falls down the chimney.

"'See! it is precisely the head of the dead man,' says the old woman. 'How he looks at me! What does he want with me, then?'

"'*That you avenge him!*' says a voice to her.

"'How stupid you are!' says the hemp-grower; 'there you are with your nonsensical, near-sighted delusions.'

"He takes the head, which bites his finger, and throws it out in his courtyard.

"'Make my omelette,' he says, 'and do not bother yourself about that. It is a cat.'

"'A cat!' she says, 'it was as round as a ball.'

"She puts her pan on the fire again.—*Pouf!* down comes a leg. Same story. The man, no more surprised to see the foot than he had been to see the head, grabs the leg and throws it out of the door. Finally, the other leg, the two arms, the body, the whole of the assassinated traveller comes

down, one piece after the other. No omelette. The old hemp-merchant was very hungry.

"'By my eternal salvation,' says he, 'if my omelette is made, we will see about satisfying that man there.'

"'You admit then now that it is a man,' says the humpback. 'Why did you say to me just now that it was not a head, you great plague?'

"The woman breaks the eggs, fries the omelette, and serves it without scolding any more, for, in seeing this squabble, she began to be anxious. Her husband seated himself and began to eat. The humpback, who was afraid, says that she is not hungry.

"'*Toc, toc!*' a stranger knocks at the door.

"'Who is there?'

"'The dead man of yesterday.'

"'Come in,' says the hemp-merchant.

"Then the traveller enters, sits down on the stool, and says:

"'Remember God, who gives His peace for all eternity to those who confess His holy name! Woman, you saw me die, and you keep silence! I have been eaten by the pigs! Pigs do not enter into paradise. Therefore I, who am a Christian, I shall go into hell because a woman will not speak.' Such a thing has never been seen. I must be delivered!'

"And other things.

"The woman, who was getting more and more afraid, cleans her pan, puts on her Sunday clothes,

goes and denounces the crime to the officers of justice; it was revealed, and the thieves neatly broken on the wheel on the market-place. This good work accomplished, the woman and her husband have always the very finest hemp that you ever saw. Then, which was more agreeable to them, they had what they had long desired, that is to say, a male child, who became, in course of time, baron of the kingdom. This is the true story of *The Brave Humpback*."

"I do not like such stories, they make me dream," said La Fosseuse. "I much prefer adventures of Napoléon."

"That is true," said the rural guard.—"Come, now, Monsieur Goguelat, tell us about the Emperor."

"It is getting too late," said the letter-carrier, "and I do not like to shorten the victories."

"All the same, tell them, nevertheless. We know them from having heard you tell them many times; but it is always pleasant to hear them."

"Tell us about the Emperor!" cried several voices together.

"You wish it?" said Goguelat. "Well, you will see that that means nothing when it is said at the double-quick. I prefer to relate to you the whole of a battle. Will you have Champ-Aubert, where there were no more cartridges and where they were polished off, all the same, with the bayonet?"

"No! The Emperor, the Emperor!"

The foot-soldier rose from his bundle of hay, threw over the assemblage that dark look, full of the

souvenirs of misery, suffering, and many events, which characterizes the veterans. He took his jacket by the two skirts in front, lifted them as if to pack again the sack in which were formerly his clothes, his shoes, all his fortune; then he rested his weight on his left leg, advanced the right and yielded with a good grace to the wishes of the assembly. After having pushed back his gray hair from one side of his forehead to reveal it, he lifted his head toward heaven in order to raise himself to the height of the gigantic history which he was about to relate.

"You see, my friends, Napoléon was born in Corsica, which is a French island, heated by the sun of Italy, where everything is as in a furnace, and where they kill each other, from father to son, apropos of nothing,—an idea which they have. That you may begin at the commencement of this extraordinary thing, his mother, who was the most beautiful woman of her time and a very shrewd one, took the notion of vowing him to God, in order that he might escape all the dangers of his infancy and of his life, because she had dreamed that the world was on fire on the day of her delivery. This was a prophecy! Therefore she asked that God would protect him, on condition that Napoléon should establish again His holy religion, which was then overthrown— This was what was agreed upon, and this was evidenced.

"Now, then, follow me carefully, and tell me if that which you are going to hear is natural!

"It is sure and certain that a man who had had

the imagination to make a secret compact could alone be capable of passing through the lines of the others, through the balls, the discharges of grape-shot which carried us away like flies, and which respected his head. I have had the proof of that, I particularly, at Eylau. I see him still, he ascends a hill, takes his glasses, looks at his battle, and says:

"'That is going well!'

"One of my busybodies all beplumed, who plagued him considerably and followed him everywhere, even while he was eating, we were told, wishes to do the smart thing and takes the Emperor's place when he goes away. Oh! swept away! no more plume! You understand well that Napoléon had promised to keep his secret to himself alone. This is why all those who accompanied him, even his particular friends, fell like nuts,—Duroc, Bessières, Lannes, all of them men strong as bars of steel which he melted to his own use. Finally, as a proof that he was a child of God, made to be the father of the soldier, it is that he was never seen either lieutenant or captain! Oh! indeed, yes! at the head immediately. He did not have the air of being more than twenty-four years old when he was an old general, after the taking of Toulon, where he commenced by letting the others see that they knew nothing about manœuvring cannon. After that, we tumble, pretty thinnish, into being general-in-chief of the army of Italy, which wanted for bread, for munitions, for shoes, for clothes, a poor army, naked as a worm.

"'My friends,' he said, 'here we are all together. Now, get this in your head, that in a fortnight from now you shall be victors, in new clothes, that you shall all have greatcoats, good gaiters, famous shoes; but, my friends, we must march to get them at Milan, where they are.'

"And we marched. The French, crushed flat as a bed-bug, picked up. We were thirty thousand barefooted against eighty thousand German bullies, all fine men, well furnished, whom I can see now. Then Napoléon, who was then only Bonaparte, blew something into our stomachs, I don't know what,—and we marched the night, and we marched the day, we smote them for you at Montenotte, we ran to drub them at Rivoli, Lodi, Arcola, Millesimo, and we did not let them alone for you. The soldier took a taste for being a vanquisher. Then Napoléon surrounds for you these German generals, who did not know where to hide themselves to be at their ease, cuffs them very well, filches from them ten thousand men at once in surrounding them for you with fifteen hundred Frenchmen whom he multiplies in his own way; in short, he takes from them their cannon, stores, money, munitions, all that they had that was good to take, throws them into the water for you, beats them on the mountain, bites them in the air, devours them on the earth, flogs them everywhere. Then you would see the troops putting on feathers again; because, you see, the Emperor, who was also a man of sense, makes himself welcome to the inhabitant, to whom he

says that he has come to deliver him. Accordingly, the citizen lodges us and makes much of us, the women also, who were very judicious women. Final end, in Ventose '96, which was at that time the month of March of to-day, we were huddled in a corner of the country of the marmots; but, after the campaign, there we were masters of Italy, as Napoléon had predicted. And, in the month of March following, in only one year and two campaigns, he set us in sight of Vienna,—everything was swept away. We had eaten up three successive, different armies, and ousted four Austrian generals, of whom one was an old one who had white hair, and who was cooked like a rat in the straw, at Mantua. The kings asked for mercy on their knees! The peace was secured. Could a man have done all that? No. God aided him, that is sure. He divided himself up like the five loaves of bread of the Gospel, ordered the battle in the daytime, prepared it during the night, the sentinels saw him always going and coming, and he neither slept nor ate. So, then, recognizing these prodigies, the soldier just adopted him for his father. And forward march!

"The others, at Paris, seeing this, said to themselves:

"'Here is a pilgrim who appears to take his orders from Heaven, he is singularly capable of putting his hand upon France; better let him loose upon Asia or upon America, he will be content with that, perhaps!'

"This was written for him as for Jesus Christ. The fact is that he was given orders to do duty in Egypt. See his likeness to the Son of God. This is not all. He gathered together his best comrades, those whom he had particularly inspired with deviltry, and said to them like this:

"'My friends, for the next quarter of an hour they have given us Egypt to chew. But we will swallow it in one time and two movements, as we have done Italy. The private soldiers shall be princes who shall have estates for themselves. Forward!'

"'Forward, children!' said the sergeants.

"And we arrive at Toulon, road to Egypt. At that time the English had all their vessels on the sea. But, when we embark, Napoléon says to us:

"'They will not see us, and it is well that you should know, at the present time, that your general possesses a star in the heavens which guides us and protects us!'

"What was said, was done. In crossing the sea, we take Malta, like an orange to quench his thirst for victory, for this was a man who could not rest without doing something. Here we are in Egypt. Good! There, another order. The Egyptians, you see, are men who, since the world was a world, are in the habit of having giants for sovereigns, armies as numerous as ants; because it is a country of genii and of crocodiles, where they have built pyramids as big as our mountains, under which

they have had the idea of putting their kings to keep them fresh,—a thing which pleases them generally. Well, then, when disembarking, the Little Corporal says to us:

"'My children, the countries which you are going to conquer belong to a pile of gods who must be respected, because the French should be the friends of all the world, and beat people without vexing them. Get it in your noddles to touch nothing at first; because we shall have everything afterward! And march!'

"This goes very well. But all those people there, to whom Napoléon was predicted under the name of Kébir-Bonaberdis, a word in their dialect which signifies *the sultan fires*, are afraid of him like the devil. Then, the Grand Turk, Asia, Africa, have recourse to magic, and send us a demon, named Mody, suspected of having descended from heaven upon a white horse which was, like his master, incombustible to bullets, and which, both of them, lived upon the air of the period. There are those who have seen him; but I, I have no reasons for making you certain of it. This was the power of Arabia and the Mamelukes, who wished to make their troopers believe that the Mody was capable of preventing them from dying in battle, under the pretext that he was an angel sent to combat Napoléon and to recover from him the seal of Solomon, one of their accoutrements, which they pretended had been stolen by our general. You understand that we made them grin, all the same.

"Ah, there! tell me, where had they learned about Napoleon's compact? Was that natural?

"It was taken for certain in their minds that he commanded the genii, and transported himself in a twinkling from one place to another, like a bird. The fact is that he was everywhere. Finally, that he had come to carry off from them a queen, beautiful as the day, for whom he had offered all his treasures and diamonds as big as pigeon's eggs, a bargain which the Mameluke, of whom she was the favorite, although he had others, had positively refused. Under these conditions, things could not then be arranged without a great many combats. And there was no mistake as to this, for there were blows for everybody. Then, we are put in line at Alexandria, at Gizeh, and before the Pyramids. It was necessary to march under the sun, in the sand, where those who were subject to fancies saw water which could not be drunken, and shade which made you sweat. But we ate up the Mamelukes ordinarily, and everything bends to the voice of Napoléon, who takes possession of Upper and Lower Egypt, Arabia, in short, even to the capitals of kingdoms which no longer existed, and where there were thousands of statues, the five hundred devils of nature, then, in particular, an infinity of lizards, a devil of a country in which each one could take his acres of land, if that were ever so little agreeable to him. While he is occupied with his affairs in the interior, where he had a notion of doing superb things, the English burn his fleet for him at the battle of Aboukir, for they did not

know what to invent in order to contrary us. But Napoléon, who had the esteem of the Orient and the Occident, whom the Pope called his son and the cousin of Mahomet his dear father, wishes to avenge himself on England, and take from her the Indies, to replace his fleet. He was going to conduct us into Asia, by the Red Sea, to countries where there are only diamonds and gold to pay the soldiers with, and palaces for way-stations, when the Mody arranges with the plague, and sends it to us to interrupt our victories. Halt! Then, everybody defiles on that parade from which you do not return on your feet.—The dying soldier cannot take for you Saint-Jean d'Acre, into which there was an entrance made three times with an obstinacy generous and martial. But the plague was the stronger; you couldn't say: '*My good friend!*' Everybody was very ill. Napoléon alone was as fresh as a rose, and the whole army saw him drinking the pest without its doing anything to him at all.

"Ah, there! my friends, do you think that was natural?

"The Mamelukes, knowing that we were all in the ambulances, wished to bar the road to us; but, with Napoléon, that farce did not work. Then, he said to his damned ones, to those who had the hide thicker than the others:

"'Go and clear the road for me.'

"Junot, who was a swordsman of the first quality, and his true friend, takes only a thousand men, and rips up for you all the same the army of a pasha

who had had the presumption to put himself in the way. After that, we return to Cairo, our head-quarters.—Another story. Napoléon absent, France had allowed her temperament to be destroyed by the people in Paris, who kept the pay of the soldiers, their allowance for linen, their clothes, allowed them to die of hunger, and wished them to make laws for the universe, without disturbing themselves in any other way. They were imbeciles who amused themselves by gossiping, instead of putting their hands to the work. And then, our armies were beaten, the frontiers of France broken into,—THE MAN was no longer there. You see, I say, *the Man*, because he was called like that, but that was a stupidity, since he had a star and all its peculiarities,—it was we others who were the men! He learns the history of France after his famous battle of Aboukir, where, without losing more than three hundred men, and with one division only, he vanquished the great army of the Turks, twenty-five thousand men strong, and he tumbled into the sea more than a big half of them, r-r-rah! This was his last thunder stroke in Egypt. He says to himself, seeing everything lost down there:

"'I am the savior of France, I know it, I must go there.'

"But you must know that the army did not know of his departure; otherwise, he would have been kept by force, to make of him Emperor of the Orient. Therefore we are very sorrowful when we are without him, for he was our joy. He leaves

his command to Kléber, who comes off guard one fine morning, assassinated by an Egyptian who was put to death by giving him a bayonet thrust in the behind, which is the manner of guillotining in that country; but that causes so much suffering that a soldier took pity on this criminal and offered him his gourd; and as soon as the Egyptian had drunk the water, he twisted his eye with an infinite pleasure. But we are not amused at this bagatelle. Napoléon sets foot on a cockle-shell, a little vessel of nothing at all, which was called *La Fortune*, and, in the wink of an eye, in the beard of the English, who were blockading him with ships of the line, frigates, and everything which sails, he disembarks in France, for he always had the gift of crossing the sea in a stride. Was that natural? Bah! as soon as he is at Fréjus, it is as much as to say that he has his feet in Paris. There, everybody adores him, but he, he convokes the government.

"'What have you done with my children, the soldiers?' he says to the lawyers; 'you are a pile of rascals who are bamboozling the people, and who devour France at your will. This is not just, and I speak for everybody who is not satisfied with you.'

"Then, they all want to gabble and to kill him; but, wait a minute! He shuts them up in their talking barracks, makes them jump out of the windows, and enrolls them for you in his following, where they become as dumb as fish, as supple as a tobacco-pouch. From this stroke he passes to be consul,

and, as it was not he who could doubt the Supreme Being, he then fulfilled his promise to the good God, who kept His word seriously with him; restores to God His churches, re-establishes His religion; the bells ring for God and for him. There you have all the world content,—*primo*, the priests, whom he prevents from being worried; *segondo*, the bourgeois who carries on his business, without having to fear the *rapiamus* of the law which had become unjust; *tertio*, the nobles, whom he forbade to be put to death, according to the habit which had unfortunately been contracted. But there were enemies to be swept away, and he did not go to sleep over the mess, because, you see, his eye surveys the whole world for you just like a man's head. Well, then, he appeared in Italy, as if he had put his head through the window, and his look sufficed. The Austrians were swallowed up at Marengo, like gudgeons by a whale! *Haouf!* Here French victory chanted her gamut sufficiently high for all the world to hear it, and that sufficed.

"'We will not play that any more,' say the Germans.

"'Enough as it is,' say the others.

"Total,—Europe shows the white feather, England gives in. General peace in which the kings and the peoples pretend to embrace each other. It is then that the Emperor invented the Legion of Honor, a very good thing, indeed.

"'In France,' he said, at Boulogne, before the entire army, 'everybody is brave! Therefore, the

civilian who shall do brilliant actions shall be the sister of the soldier, the soldier shall be his brother, and they will be united under the flag of honor.'

"We others, who were down there, we return from Egypt. Everything was changed! We had left him a general, in no time at all we find him an Emperor. Upon my word, France had given herself to him like a pretty girl to a lancer. Then, when this was done, to the general satisfaction, one may say, there took place a sacred ceremony such as had never been seen under the canopy of heaven. The Pope and the cardinals, in their robes of gold and of red, crossed the Alps expressly to crown him before the army and the people, who clapped their hands. There is a thing which I should be unfair not to say to you. In Egypt, in the desert, near to Syria, THE RED MAN appeared to him on the mountain of Moses, to say to him:

"'Things are going well!'

"Then, at Marengo, the evening of the victory, for the second time, there arose before him on his feet the Red Man, who said to him:

"'Thou shalt see the world at thy feet, and thou shalt be Emperor of the French, King of Italy, master of Holland, sovereign of Spain, of Portugal, of the Illyrian provinces, protector of Germany, savior of Poland, first eagle of the Legion of Honor, and everything!'

"This Red Man, you see, was his inspiration, a sort of messenger who served him, as several say, to communicate with his star. I, I have never believed

that; but the Red Man is a veritable fact, and Napoléon spoke of him himself, and said that he came to him in those moments which were hard to endure, and lived in the palace of the Tuileries in the garrets. So, at the coronation, Napoléon saw him in the evening for the third time, and they were in deliberation over many things. Then, the Emperor went straight to Milan, to be crowned King of Italy. There commences the real triumph of the soldier. From that time, anyone who knew how to write became an officer. Then you might see it raining pensions, endowments of duchies; treasures for the general staff which cost nothing to France; and the Legion of Honor furnished incomes for the private soldiers, from which I still draw my pension. Finally, you might see the armies uniformed in such a manner as had never been seen before. But the Emperor, who knew that he was going to be emperor of the world, thinks of the bourgeois, and causes to be built for them, according to their ideas, fairy palaces, there where there was no more to be seen than there is on my hand.—Supposing that you were returning from Spain to go to Berlin; well, you would find triumphal arches with private soldiers upon them in fine sculpture, neither more nor less than generals. Napoléon, in two or three years, without putting any taxes on you others, filled his vaults with gold, made bridges, palaces, roads, philosophers, fêtes, laws, ships, ports; and expended millions of trillions, and so much, and so much, that I have been told that he could have

paved France with hundred-sou pieces, if that had been his fancy. Then, when he found himself comfortably on his throne, and so completely the master of all, that Europe waited for his permission to attend to her affairs, as he had four brothers and three sisters, he said to us conversationally, in the order of the day:

"'My children, is it just that the relatives of your Emperor should have to seek alms? No. I wish that they should be brilliant, just like me! Therefore, it is quite necessary to conquer a kingdom for each of them, so that the French shall be the masters of everything; that the soldiers of the Guard should make the world tremble, and that France may spit wherever she wants to, and that it should be said to her, as on my coins, "*God protects you!*"'

"'Agreed!' replies the army, 'we will go and fish up kingdoms for thee with the bayonet.'

"Ah! this was the time that there was no going backward, you see! and, if he had taken it into his head to conquer the moon, it would have been necessary to arrange for that, pack his knapsacks and climb. Luckily, he did not wish to do it. The kings, who were accustomed to the comfort of their thrones, naturally had to have their ears pulled, and then, forward march! for us. We march, we go, and the earthquake recommences in its entire solidity. How he used up men and shoes in those days! Then, there was fighting against our blows so cruelly that any others but the French would be tired of it. But you are not ignorant of the fact that the Frenchman

is born a philosopher, and, a little sooner, a little later, knows that he must die. Therefore we all died without saying anything, because it was a pleasure to see the Emperor do that on the geographies.—Here the foot-soldier described quickly a circle with his foot on the threshing-floor of the barn.—And he said: 'That, that will be a kingdom!' and that was a kingdom. What fine times! The colonels became generals, in the time it took to see them; the generals, marshals; the marshals, kings. And there is still one who is alive to say it to Europe, although he is a Gascon, a traitor to France to keep his crown, who did not blush for shame, because, you see, the crowns are in gold! In short, the sappers who knew how to read became nobles, all the same. I who am speaking to you, I have seen at Paris eleven kings and a crowd of princes who surrounded Napoléon like the rays of the sun. You understand that every soldier had a chance to pick up a throne, provided that he had the merit, a corporal of the Guard was something like a curiosity which was admired as he passed by, because each one had his contingent in the victory, perfectly shown in the bulletin. And what battles there were! Austerlitz, where the army manœuvred as if on parade; Eylau, where the Russians were drowned in a lake, as if Napoléon had blown upon it; Wagram, where they fought for three days without grumbling. In short, there were as many battles as there are saints in the calendar. Also then was it proven that Napoléon had in his scabbard the real sword of God. Then, the soldier possessed his

esteem, and was made by him his child, he was concerned whether you had shoes, linen, greatcoats, bread, cartridges; although he maintained his majesty, since it was his trade to reign. But, all the same, a sergeant and even a soldier could say to him: 'My Emperor,' as you say to me sometimes: 'My good friend.' And he answered the arguments that were made to him, slept in the snow like the rest of us; in short, he had almost the air of a natural man. I who am speaking to you, I have seen him, the feet in the grape-shot, no more disturbed than you are there, and alert, looking through his glasses, always about his business; then, we remained there, as peaceable as Baptiste. I do not know how he managed it, but, when he spoke to us, his words put something like fire in our stomachs; and, to show him that we were his children, incapable of grumbling, we went at marching gait before the blackguard cannons, which yawned and vomited regiments of bullets, without saying 'take care.' In short, the dying had the idea of raising themselves up to salute him and to cry to him:

"'*Vive l'Empereur!*'

"Was that natural? would you have done that for a simple man?

"At that time, all his family established, the Empress Josephine, who was a good wife all the same, having the thing so arranged as not to give him any children, he was obliged to leave her, although he loved her considerably. But he had to have children, on account of the government. Learning

of this difficulty, all the sovereigns of Europe fought as to who should give him a wife. And he married, we were told, an Austrian woman, who was the daughter of a Cæsar, an ancient man who is everywhere spoken of, and not only in our country, where you hear it said that he did everything, but in Europe. And this is so true that, I who am speaking to you at this moment, I have been on the Danube where I have seen portions of a bridge built by this man, who appears to have been, at Rome, a relative of Napoléon, where he authorized the Emperor to take the heritage for his son. Then, after his marriage, which was a fête for the whole world, and where he remitted to the people ten years of taxes, which were paid all the same, because the tax-gatherers did not take account of it, his wife had a little one who was King of Rome; a thing which has not yet been seen upon the earth, for never was a child born a king while his father was living. That day a balloon left Paris to carry the news to Rome, and this balloon made the journey in a day. Ah, there! are there still some of you who will maintain to me that all that was natural? No, it was written above! And the itch take him who will not say that he was sent by God himself to make France triumph! But now there was the Emperor of Russia, who had been his friend, who is vexed because he did not marry a Russian woman and who sustains the English, our enemies, to whom Napoléon had always been prevented from going to say two words in their shops. It was necessary, then, to finish

with these tricks. Napoléon is vexed, and says to us:

"'Soldiers! you have been masters of all the capitals of Europe; save Moscow, which is allied to England. Now, to be able to conquer London and the Indies which belong to them, I find it definitely necessary to go to Moscow.'

"Then, there assembles the greatest army that had ever trailed its gaiters over the globe, and so curiously well aligned that one day he passed in review a million of men.

"'*Hourra!*' say the Russians.

"And then you might see the whole of Russia, those animals of Cossacks who fly away. It was country against country, a general uproar, and it was well to get out of its way. And, as the Red Man had said to Napoléon:

"'It is Asia against Europe!'

"'That is sufficient,' he said, 'I will take precautions.'

"And you might see, in fact, all the kings who came to lick the hand of Napoléon! Austria, Prussia, Bavaria, Saxony, Poland, Italy, all are with us, flatter us, and that was fine! The eagles never cooed as they did at these parades, where they were above all the flags of Europe. The Poles could not contain themselves for joy, because the Emperor had the idea of lifting them up; from that, Poland and France have always been brothers. Finally:

"'Russia for us!' cries the army.

"We enter, very well furnished; we march, march,—no Russians. Finally, we find our mastiffs encamped at the Moscova. It was there that I got the cross, and I have permission to say that it was a cursed battle! The Emperor was anxious, he had seen the Red Man, who said to him:

"'My son, thou art forcing the pace, men will fail thee, friends will betray thee.'

"Then, proposals of peace. But, before signing:

"'Let us pummel the Russians!' he says to us.

"'Done!' cried the army.

"'Forward!' said the sergeants.

"My shoes were worn out, my clothes all torn, through having run up and down those roads, which are not convenient at all! But that is nothing!

"'Since it is the end of the earthquake,' I say to myself, 'I wish to get my belly full!'

"We were before the great ravine; they were the front places! The signal is given, seven hundred pieces of artillery begin a conversation that would make your blood come out of your ears. There, you must do justice to your enemies, the Russians died like the French, without falling back, and we did not advance.

"'Forward!' they say to us, 'there is the Emperor!'

"That was true,—passes at a gallop making us a sign that it was very important to take the redoubt. He animates us, we run, I arrive the first in the ravine. Ah! *Mon Dieu!* the lieutenants fall, the colonels, the soldiers. That is all the same! That

made shoes for those who had none and epaulettes for the intriguers who knew how to read.—'Victory!' it is the cry all along the line. As an example, that had never before been seen, there were twenty-five thousand Frenchmen on the ground. Excuse me a little! It was a real field of grain cut down,—instead of ears, put men! we were sobered, we others. The man arrives, a circle is made around him. Then, he wheedles us, for he was amiable when he wished to be, to the point of satisfying our hardships with a hunger equal to that of two wolves. Then, my wheedler distributes the crosses himself, salutes the dead; then he says to us:

"'To Moscow!'

"'On to Moscow!' says the army.

"We take Moscow. Did not the Russians burn their city? It was like a straw fire for two leagues, which flamed for two days. The buildings tumbled like slates. There were rains of iron and of melted lead which were naturally horrible; and it can be said to you, to you here, this was the lightning of our misfortunes. The Emperor said:

"'Enough of this, all my soldiers shall rest here.'

"We amuse ourselves by refreshing ourselves for a minute and by fixing up the body, for we were really much fatigued. We carry off a cross of gold which was on the Kremlin, and every soldier had a little fortune. But, on our return, the winter comes a month earlier, a thing which the savants, who are stupid, have not sufficiently explained, and the cold pinches us. No more an army, do you understand?

no more generals, no more sergeants even! Then, it was the reign of misery and hunger, a reign in which we were really all equals! Nothing was thought of but to see France again; no one stooped to pick up his gun or his money; and everyone went straight before him, his arms as he pleased, without thinking of glory. In short, the weather was so bad that the Emperor no longer saw his star. There was something between the sky and him. Poor man, how sick he was to see his eagles going backward from victory! And that gave him a severe one, you may be sure! Then comes the Béresina. Here, my friends, it can be affirmed to you by all that there is of the most sacred, upon honor, that, since there have been men, never, a great never, was there seen such a fricassee of an army, of wagons, of artillery, in such a snow, under a sky so ungrateful. The barrel of the muskets burned your hand if you touched it, it was so cold. It is there that the army was saved by the *pontonniers*, who were solid at their posts, and there Gondrin behaved himself perfectly, the only one living of those who were obstinate enough to go into the water in order to build the bridges over which the army passed, and escaped the Russians, who had still a respect for the Grand Army, on account of the victories. And," said he, pointing to Gondrin, who was watching him with the attention peculiar to the deaf, "Gondrin is a finished trooper, a trooper of honor, even, who is entitled to your highest regards.

"I saw," he resumed, "the Emperor standing

near the bridge, motionless, not feeling the cold. Was that natural again? He watched the loss of his treasures, of his friends, of his old Egyptians. Bah! everything passed, the women, the carts, the artillery, everything was consumed, devoured, ruined. The most courageous guarded the eagles, because the eagles, you see, they were France, they were all you others, they were the honor of the civil and the military, which should remain pure and not stoop its head because of the cold. No one was warmed scarcely excepting near the Emperor, since, when he was in danger, we ran there, frozen, we who would not stop to extend the hand to a friend. It was said also that he wept in the night over his poor family of soldiers. There were only he and the French to get ourselves out of there; and we got out, but with losses, and very great losses, I say to you! The allies had eaten our provisions. Everything began to betray him, as the Red Man had said to him. The gabblers of Paris, who had been silent since the establishment of the Imperial Guard, thought him dead and got up a conspiracy, in which was the prefect of police, to overthrow the Emperor. He learns these things, they vex him, you see, and he says to us when he left:

"'Adieu, my children, guard the posts; I will return.'

"Bah! his generals lost their heads; for, without him, it was no longer the same thing. The marshals spoke foolishnesses to each other, did stupidities, and this was natural; Napoléon, who was a good

man, had nourished them with gold, they became as fat as bacon, so that they did not want to march. From this came misfortunes, because several of them remained in garrison without rubbing the back of the enemies behind whom they were, whilst we were being pushed toward France. But the Emperor returns to us with conscripts, and famous conscripts, of whom he changed the quality completely, and made of them fine dogs, fit to bite anyone whatever, with bourgeois as guards of honor, a fine troop that melted like butter on a griddle. Notwithstanding all our firmness, everything is against us; but the army still performs prodigies of valor. Then, giving mountain battles, peoples against peoples, at Dresden, Lutzen, Bautzen— Remember this, all of you, because it was then that Frenchmen were so particularly heroic that, at that time, a good grenadier did not last more than six months. We triumph always, but behind our backs would you not see the English making the people revolt by telling them nonsense! In short, we make daylight through these packs of nations. Everywhere that the Emperor appears, we clear the way, because, on land as on sea, wherever he said: 'I will pass,' we passed.

"Final end, we are in France, and there is more than one poor foot-soldier for whom, notwithstanding the hardness of the season, the air of his country has put his soul in a satisfactory state. I, I can say, for my own case, that that refreshed my life.—But at this hour it was a question of defending France, the

country, the beautiful France, in fact, against the whole of Europe, which was vexed at us for having wished to lay down the law to the Russians, in pushing them back within their proper limits, so that they should not eat us up, as is the habit of the North, which has a keen appetite for the South, a thing which I have heard said by several generals. Then, the Emperor sees his own father-in-law, his friends whom he had made kings, and the blackguards to whom he had restored their thrones, all against him. Finally, even the French and the allies turned against us by superior orders, in our ranks, as at the battle of Leipsic. Are not these horrors of which simple soldiers are scarcely capable? Those people broke their word three times a day, and they called themselves princes! Then, the invasion takes place. Everywhere that the Emperor shows his lion face, the enemy recoils, and he did at that time, in defending France, more prodigies than he had done in conquering Italy, the Orient, Spain, Europe, and Russia. Then, at that time, he wishes to bury all the foreigners at once, in order to teach them to respect France, and to let them come before Paris so as to swallow them all at once, and lift himself to the last degree of genius by a battle still greater than all the others, a mother of battles, in short! But the Parisians, afraid for their skins worth two farthings and their shops worth two sous, open their gates; it is the *ragusades* which begin and the fine times which end, the Empress who is nagged at, the white banner which is put in the windows.

Finally, the generals, whom he had made his best friends, abandon him for the Bourbons, who had never been heard of. Then he says adieu to us at Fontainebleau:

"'Soldiers!'—

"I hear him now, we all wept like real children; the eagles, the flags, were drooped as for a funeral, for, I may say to you that it was the funeral of the Empire, and its smart armies were no longer anything but skeletons. Then, he said to us, from the top of the perron of his château:

"'My children, we are vanquished by treason, but we shall see each other again in heaven, the country of the brave. Defend my little son, whom I confide to you: *Vive Napoléon II!*'

"He thought of dying; and, to prevent the sight of Napoléon vanquished, he takes a poison that would kill a regiment, because, like Jesus Christ before His Passion, he believed himself to be abandoned of God and by his talisman; but the poison had no effect upon him at all. Another thing! he recognized himself as immortal. Sure of himself, and of being always an Emperor, he goes on an island for a little time to study the manners and doings of those others, who did not fail to commit follies without end. Whilst he was on watch, the Chinese and the animals of the African coast, of the Barbary States and others who are not nice at all, were so convinced that he was something else than a man that they respected his flag, saying that to touch it was to offend God. He reigned over the whole

world, whilst these others had put him out of the door of his own France. Then, he embarks on the same cockle-shell as in Egypt, passes under the beard of the English vessels, sets his foot on French soil; all France recognizes him, the sacred cuckoo flies from steeple to steeple, all France cries: '*Vive l'Empereur!*' And just here the enthusiasm for this wonder of the ages was solid, Dauphiné behaved excellently; and I was particularly pleased to know that they wept with joy when they saw his gray overcoat again.

"On the first of March, Napoléon disembarked with two hundred men to conquer the kingdom of France and Navarre, which, on the 20th of March, had become the French Empire. The man found himself on that day in Paris, having swept up everything, he had taken again his dear France, and gathered up his troopers by saying to them only these two words: 'Here I am!' It is the greatest miracle that God has done! Before him, did any man ever take an empire only by showing his hat? It was thought that France was crushed? Not at all. At the sight of the eagle, a national army is formed again, and we all march to Waterloo. At that time, there, the Guard die at a single blow. Napoléon, in despair, throws himself three times before the enemy's cannon at the head of the rest, without finding death! We saw that, we others! Behold the battle lost. In the evening, the Emperor calls together his old soldiers, burns in a field full of our blood his flags and his eagles; those poor eagles,

always victorious, which had screamed in the battles 'Forward!' and which had flown over the whole of Europe, were saved from the infamy of being taken by the enemy. The treasures of all England could not give her even the tail of an eagle. No more eagles! The rest is sufficiently well known. The Red Man passed over to the Bourbons, like the wretch that he is.

"France is crushed, the soldier is no longer anything, he is deprived of what is due him, he is sent back to his own place for you, only to take in his stead the nobles who could no longer march, which was pitiful. Napoléon is captured by treason, the English nail him on a desert island in the midst of the ocean, on a rock elevated ten thousand feet above the world. Final ending, he is obliged to remain there, until the Red Man restores to him his power for the happiness of France. These others say he is dead! Ah, well, yes! dead! it is very evident that they do not know him. They repeat that humbug to catch the people and to make them stay quiet in their barracks of a government. Listen: the truth of the matter is that his enemies left him alone in the desert, in order to fulfil a prophecy made about him, for I forgot to inform you that his name of Napoléon signifies *the Lion of the desert*. And this is as true as the Gospel. All the other things which you will hear said about the Emperor are stupidities which have no natural shape. Because, you see, it is not to the child of a woman that God would have given the right

to trace his name in red, as he has written his name upon the earth, which will always remember him!—*Vive Napoléon!* the father of the people and of the soldier!"

"*Vive le Général Eblé!*" cried the *pontonnier*.

"How did you manage so as not to die in the ravine of the Moscova?" said a peasant woman.

"How do I know? We entered it a regiment, we were left standing there a hundred foot-soldiers, because there were only foot-soldiers capable of taking it! The infantry, you see, it is everything in an army—"

"And how about the cavalry?" exclaimed Genestas, allowing himself to slide down from the top of the hay and appearing with a suddenness which caused the most courageous to utter a cry of affright. "*Hé!* my veteran, you forget the red lancers of Poniatowski, the cuirassiers, the dragoons, all the shock! When Napoléon, impatient at seeing his battle not advancing toward the conclusion of the victory, said to Murat: 'Sire, cut that in two for me!' we set out, at first, at a trot, then at a gallop; *one, two!* the army of the enemy was split like an apple with a knife. A charge of cavalry, my old fellow—why, it is a column of cannon-balls!"

"And the *pontonniers?*" exclaimed the deaf man.

"Ah, there! my children," resumed Genestas, quite ashamed of his incursion on seeing himself in the midst of a circle silent and stupefied, "there are no inciters to disloyalty here! Hold! here is something with which to drink to the Little Corporal."

"*Vive l'Empereur!*" cried, with one voice, all the gathering.

"*Chut!* my children," said the officer, endeavoring to conceal his profound grief. "*Chut! he died* saying: 'Glory, France, and battle!' My children, he had to die, he; but his memory—never!"

Goguelat made a sign of incredulity, then he said in a low voice to his neighbors:

"The officer is still in the service, and it is their orders to say to the people that the Emperor is dead. You must not be vexed with him, because, after all, a soldier knows only his orders."

As he left the barn, Genestas overheard La Fosseuse, who said:

"That officer, you see, is a friend of the Emperor and of Monsieur Benassis."

All the people in the barn hurried to the door to see the commandant again; and, by the light of the moon, they perceived him taking the arm of the physician.

"I have done a stupid thing," said Genestas. "Let us get home quickly! Those eagles, those cannon, those campaigns!—I no longer knew where I was."

"Well, what do you say of my Goguelat?" asked the doctor.

"Monsieur, with such recitals, France will always have in her stomach the fourteen armies of the Republic, and will be perfectly able to sustain the conversation with cannon-shot with Europe. That is my opinion."

In a few moments they reached the dwelling of Benassis, and presently found themselves, both somewhat thoughtful, seated one on each side of the chimney-piece of the salon, where the dying fire still threw out a few sparks. Notwithstanding the testimonials of his confidence which he had received from the physician, Genestas still hesitated to put to him a last question which might seem indiscreet; but, after having regarded him with a few searching glances, he was encouraged by one of those smiles, full of the amenities, which animate the lips of men who are truly strong, and by which Benassis seemed already to reply favorably. He therefore said to him:

"Monsieur, your life differs so greatly from that of ordinary people, that you will not be surprised to hear me ask of you the cause of your retirement. If my curiosity should seem to you inconvenient, you will admit that it is very natural. Listen: I have had comrades to whom I have never used the familiar *thou*, not even after having made several campaigns with them; but I have had others to whom I would say: 'Go and get our money from the paymaster!' three days after we had been tipsy together, as sometimes may happen to the most honest people in the course of necessary convivialities. Well, you are one of those men whose friend I make myself, without waiting for their permission, and even without well knowing why."

"Captain Bluteau—"

For some time past, on every occasion on which the physician had uttered the fictitious name that

his guest had assumed, the latter had been unable to repress a slight grimace. At this moment, Benassis surprised this expression of repugnance, and looked steadily at the officer in the endeavor to discover the cause; but, as it was very difficult for him to divine the true one, he attributed this movement to some bodily pain, and said, continuing:

"Captain, I am going to speak of myself. Several times already since yesterday I have done a sort of violence to myself in explaining to you the improvements which I have been able to bring about here; but it was a question of the commune and of its inhabitants, with the interests of which my own are necessarily mingled. Now, to tell you my own story, that would be to entertain you only with myself, and my life has but little of interest in it."

"Were it simpler than that of your Fosseuse," replied Genestas, "I should still wish to hear it, that I might know of the vicissitudes which could throw into this canton a man of your quality."

"Captain, for the last twelve years I have not spoken. Now that I am waiting, on the edge of my grave, the stroke that shall precipitate me into it, I will have the good faith to admit to you that this silence is beginning to weigh upon me. For the last twelve years I have suffered without having received the consolations which friendship lavishes on sorrowful hearts. My poor patients, my peasants, offer me, indeed, the example of a perfect resignation, but I understand them, and they perceive it;

whilst no one here can receive my secret tears, nor give me that grasp of the hand of an honest man, the finest of recompenses, which is not wanting for anyone, not even for Gondrin."

With a sudden movement, Genestas extended his hand to Benassis, who was strongly affected by this gesture.

"Perhaps La Fosseuse would have understood me like an angel," he resumed, in an altered voice, "but she would, perhaps, have loved me, and that would have been a misfortune. See, captain, only an indulgent old soldier, such as you are, or a young man filled with illusions, could hear my confession, for it could be comprehended only by a man to whom life is well known, or by a youth to whom it is entirely strange. For want of a priest, the ancient captains, dying on the field of battle, confessed themselves on the cross of their sword-hilts; they made of it a trusty confidant between themselves and God. Now, you, one of Napoléon's best blades, you, strong and hard as steel, perhaps you will well understand me? In order to be interested in my recital, it is necessary to enter into certain delicacies of sentiment, and to share in the beliefs natural to simple hearts, but which would appear absurd to many philosophers accustomed to make use, for their private interests, of maxims usually reserved for the government of States. I am going to speak to you in good faith, like a man who wishes to justify neither the good nor the evil of his life, but who will conceal nothing from you, because he is to-day far

from the world, indifferent to the judgment of men, and full of hope in God."

Benassis stopped, then he rose, saying:

"Before taking up my story, I am going to order the tea. For the last twelve years Jacquotte has never failed to come to ask me if I would take it, she will certainly interrupt us. Will you have some, captain?"

"No, I thank you."

Benassis quickly returned.

IV

THE COUNTRY DOCTOR'S CONFESSION

"I was born," began the doctor, "in a small town in Languedoc, where my father had long been settled, and where my early years were passed. At the age of eight I was sent to school at Sorrèze, and left there only to complete my studies in Paris. My father had had the wildest and most extravagant youth; but his squandered patrimony was rehabilitated by a fortunate marriage, and by the slow process of saving practised in the provinces, where wealth, not extravagance, is the source of vanity, where the ambition natural to mankind disappears and turns to avarice, for lack of generous food. Having become rich, and having but one son, he determined to transmit to him the cold indifference born of experience, for which he had exchanged his vanished illusions: the last and noble error of old men, who try in vain to bequeath their virtues and their prudent habit of counting the cost to children who are enchanted with life and in haste to enjoy. That foresight led to the adoption of a plan for my education to which I fell a victim. My father concealed from me the extent of his wealth, and condemned me, in my own interest, to undergo,

during my best years, the privations and anxieties of a young man determined to win his own independence; he wished to inculcate in me the virtues of poverty: patience, thirst for knowledge, and love of work.

"By teaching me thus to appreciate wealth at its true value, he hoped to teach me to respect my inheritance; and so, as soon as I was in a position to listen to his advice, he urged me to adopt and follow some career. My tastes inclined me to the study of medicine. From Sorrèze, where I had remained ten years subject to the semi-conventual discipline of the Oratorians, and buried in the solitude of a provincial school, I was taken, without any transition, to the capital. My father accompanied me, to place me in charge of one of his friends. The two old men, without my knowledge, took minute precautions against the effervescence of my youth, at that time very innocent. My allowance was adapted strictly to the real necessities of life, and I was to receive the quarterly payments only upon presentation of receipts for my fee-bills at the School of Medicine. This decidedly insulting distrust was disguised under pretexts relating to the orderly keeping of accounts. My father was quite liberal, however, in the matter of all the outlay made necessary by my education and in the matter of the pleasures of Parisian life. His old friend, who was delighted to have a young man to guide through the labyrinth I was about to enter, was one of those men who classify their sentiments

as carefully as they arrange their papers. On consulting his memoranda for the past year, he could always tell what he was doing at the hour of the day and day of the month corresponding to the time at which he consulted them. Life to him was like a business undertaking of which he kept the accounts. A man of considerable merit, but shrewd, over-precise, and suspicious, he never lacked specious reasons for explaining away the precautions he took in my regard; he bought my books, he paid for my tuition; when I wanted to learn to ride, the good man himself made inquiries as to the best school, took me there, and anticipated my wishes by placing a horse at my disposal for holidays. Despite that old man's strategy, which I was able to defeat as soon as I had any interest in contending with him, the excellent man was a second father to me.

"'My dear boy,' he said to me, when he realized that I should break my leash if he did not lengthen it, 'young men often do foolish things into which youthful impetuosity leads them, and it may happen that you will at some time be in need of money; in that case, come to me. Long ago your father courteously did me a great favor, and I shall always have a crown or two at your disposal; but never lie to me, don't be ashamed to confess your mistakes; I have been young myself, and we shall always understand each other, like two good friends.'

"My father installed me in a bourgeois boarding-house in the Latin Quarter, with a respectable

family, where I had a reasonably well-furnished room. And yet that first experience of independence, my father's kindness, the sacrifice he seemed to be making for me, caused me little satisfaction. Perhaps one must have enjoyed liberty to appreciate it at its true value. But the memory of my independent childhood was almost effaced under the weight of the *ennui* of my school-days, which my mind had not yet shaken off; moreover, my father's instructions pointed to new tasks for me to perform; and, lastly, Paris was to me like an enigma, one cannot enjoy one's self there without having made a study of its amusements. So I saw little change in my position except that my present institution was more extensive and was called the School of Medicine. However, I studied bravely at first, I attended the lectures assiduously; I threw myself into my work, body and soul, without taking any relaxation, the treasures of knowledge in which the capital abounds so excited my imagination. But soon imprudent intimacies, whose dangers were veiled by the foolishly trustful friendship that seduces all young men, led me insensibly into Parisian dissipation. Theatres and actors, for whom I had a passionate admiration, began the work of my demoralization. The theatrical performances of a capital have a very baleful influence on young men, who never go out from them without keen emotions against which they struggle unavailingly almost always, and society and the laws seem to me to share the responsibility for the faults which they commit at such times.

Our legislation has closed its eyes, so to speak, to the passions which torment the young man between twenty and twenty-five. In Paris everything assails him, his appetites are constantly appealed to; religion preaches virtue to him, the laws enjoin it, while facts and customs invite him to vice; do not the most virtuous man and the most devout woman laugh at continence? In fact, the great city seems to have made it its duty to encourage only vices, for the obstacles which at the outset debar a young man from the professions in which he can honorably make a fortune are even more numerous than the snares constantly laid for his passions in order to rob him of his money.

"For a long time, then, I went to some theatre every evening, and gradually contracted habits of idleness. I compounded with my duties, I often put off my most urgent occupations until the next day; soon, instead of trying to learn, I did only so much as was absolutely necessary to obtain the degrees that I must obtain in order to be a doctor. At the public lectures I no longer listened to the professors, who, as I declared, talked nonsense. I was already shattering my idols, I was becoming a Parisian. In short, I led the aimless life of a young man from the provinces, who, being turned adrift in the capital, still retains some worthy sentiments, still believes in certain moral rules, but who is corrupted by bad examples, even while having a disposition to defend himself against them. I made a weak defence, I had accomplices within. Yes, monsieur, my face is

not misleading, I have had all the passions whose marks still remain upon me. And yet I preserved in the depths of my heart a feeling of moral perfection which followed me throughout my disorderly life and which was destined to lead back to God, by the way of weariness and remorse, the man whose youth had quenched its thirst with the pure waters of religion. Is not he who keenly enjoys earthly pleasures, attracted sooner or later by a longing for the fruits of Heaven? I experienced at first the innumerable joys, the innumerable agonies of despair which are found, more or less active, in all youthful lives; sometimes I mistook the consciousness of my strength for a determined will, and deceived myself as to the extent of my faculties; sometimes, at sight of the most trivial obstacle with which I was about to come in contact, I fell much lower than I should naturally have fallen; I conceived the most immense schemes, I dreamed of glory, I made great preparations for work; but a pleasure party would put those noble resolutions to flight. The vague remembrance of my grand but abortive conceptions left in my mind deceptive gleams which accustomed me to believe in myself, without supplying me with the requisite energy to produce. That self-sufficient indolence resulted in my becoming a mere fool. Is not he a fool who does nothing to justify the good opinion he forms of himself? Such activity as I manifested was purposeless, I desired the flowers of life without the work that makes them bloom. Knowing nothing

of obstacles, I believed that everything was easy, I attributed to good luck the triumphs of science and the triumphs of fortune. To my mind genius was charlatanism! I imagined that I was a scholar, because it was in my power to become one; and without a thought either of the patience that produces great works, or of the good sense that discloses their difficulties, I discounted all forms of glory.

"My pleasures were speedily exhausted, the theatre does not amuse one for long; Paris therefore soon seemed empty and deserted to a poor student whose society consisted of an old man who had forgotten all that he ever knew, and a family where he met only tiresome people. And so, like all young men who are disgusted with the career they have adopted, but have no fixed idea nor any course of action decided upon in their minds, I wandered for hours at a time about the streets and quays, through the museums and public gardens. When one's time is unemployed, it hangs heavier at that age than at any other, for life is then overflowing with wasted sap and with aimless activity. I failed to appreciate the power that a firm will places in the hands of the young man when he has the intellect to conceive, and when he has at his disposal, to carry out his conceptions, all the vital forces, augmented by the fearless faith of youth. As children, we are innocent, we know nothing of the dangers of life; as young men, we perceive its difficulties and its vast scope: at that discovery the courage sometimes fails; being still new to the trade

of social life, we remain under the influence of a sort of idiocy, a feeling of stupor, as if we were friendless in a strange land. At every age the unknown causes involuntary terror. The young man is like the soldier who marches boldly up to the cannon's mouth and runs away from a ghost. He hesitates between the maxims of the world; he does not know how either to give or to accept, to defend himself or to attack; he loves women and respects them as if he were afraid of them; his good qualities serve him ill; he is all generosity, all modesty, and untainted by the selfish scheming of avarice; if he lies, it is for his pleasure, not for gain; his conscience, with which he has not yet compounded, points him to the right road among many doubtful ones, and he delays to follow it.

"Men destined to be guided by inspirations of the heart, instead of listening to the projects that emanate from the brain, remain for a long time in that situation. That was my case. I became the plaything of two opposing causes. I was simultaneously spurred on by a young man's passions and held back by his sentimental idiocy. The emotions of Paris have a cruel effect upon minds endowed with keen sensibility: the advantages which those of superior mind or the rich enjoy incite their passions; in this world of greatness and pettiness, jealousy acts more frequently as a dagger than as a spur; amid the constant conflict of ambitions, desires, and enmities, it is impossible not to be either the victim or the accomplice of this general tendency; the constant

picture of happy vice and virtue ridiculed, insensibly makes a young man waver; Parisian life soon rubs the gloss off his conscience; thereupon the infernal process of demoralization begins and is consummated. The first of pleasures, that which, at the outset, includes all others, is surrounded by such perils that it is impossible not to reflect on the most trivial actions it provokes, and not to calculate all their consequences. Such calculations lead to selfishness. If some poor student, carried away by the impetuosity of his passions, is disposed to forget himself, those who surround him display and inspire so much distrust, that it is very difficult for him not to share it, not to put himself on his guard against ennobling ideas. The conflict withers and contracts the heart, drives life to the brain, and produces that Parisian insensibility, that moral state, wherein policy or money lies hidden beneath the most charming frivolity, beneath extravagant demonstrations which mimic lofty sentiments. But the intoxication of happiness does not prevent the most ingenuous woman from retaining her faculties.

"That atmosphere was certain to influence my conduct and my sentiments. The errors that poisoned my life would have weighed lightly on the hearts of many men; but we of the South have a religious faith which makes us believe in the truths of the Catholic religion and in a future life. This faith imparts great depth to our passions and great persistency to our remorse. At the period when I was studying medicine, the soldiers were

masters everywhere; in order to make an impression on the ladies, one must be at least a colonel. What did a poor student amount to in society? nothing. Feeling keenly the stimulus of my ardent passions and finding no outlet for them; restrained at every step, at every wish, by lack of money; regarding study and glory as a too dilatory means of procuring the pleasures which tempted me; wavering between my secret modesty and the evil examples I had before me; finding every facility for dissipation in low life, and nothing but obstacles to gaining admission to good society, I passed many melancholy days, a prey to the surges of passion, to the idleness that kills, to fits of discouragement interspersed with moments of sudden exaltation. This crisis came to an end at last in a way not at all uncommon among young men. I have always had the greatest repugnance to disturbing the happiness of a household; moreover, my natural outspokenness makes it impossible for me to conceal my sentiments; it would have been, therefore, a physical impossibility for me to live in a condition of flagrant falsehood. Pleasures snatched in haste have little attraction for me, I like to relish happiness. Not being openly vicious, I found myself without protection against my isolation, after so many unavailing efforts to make my way into the best society, where I might have met a woman who would have devoted herself to explaining to me the dangers of each road, to giving me excellent manners, to advising me without offending my pride, and to introducing me

wherever I might have formed connections likely to be of benefit to me in the future. In my despair the most hazardous of liaisons would, perhaps, have attracted me; but everything failed me, even danger! and inexperience brought me back to my solitude, where I remained face to face with my betrayed passions.

"At last, monsieur, I formed a liaison, secret at first, with a young woman whom I persistently assailed until she espoused my lot. That young woman, who belonged to a respectable but far from wealthy family, soon abandoned for my sake her modest life and fearlessly entrusted to me a future which her virtue had made bright with promise. The mediocrity of my condition seemed to her, I doubt not, the surest of safeguards. From that moment, the storms that caused a constant turmoil in my heart, my extravagant longings, my ambition, all were allayed by pure happiness, the happiness of a young man who as yet knows neither the ways of the world, nor its maxims of order, nor the force of prejudices; but absolute happiness, like that of a child. What is first love but a second childhood cast athwart on days of toil and suffering? There are men who learn the whole of life at one stroke, judge it as it is, detect the errors of the world to profit by them, grasp its social precepts in order to turn them to their advantage, and who are able to estimate the scope of everything. Such cool, calculating men are wise according to the laws of mankind. Again, there are poor poets,

nervous creatures, who feel keenly and make mistakes; I was of these last. My first attachment was not, to begin with, a real passion; I followed my instinct, not my heart. I sacrificed a poor girl to myself, and I did not lack excellent reasons to persuade myself that I was doing nothing wrong. As for her, she was devotion itself, a heart of gold, a judicious mind, a beautiful soul. She never gave me any but excellent advice. At first her love rekindled my courage; then she gently led me to resume my studies, believing fully in me and predicting success, glory, and fortune for me. To-day medical science is connected with all the sciences, and to distinguish one's self in it is a difficult but handsomely rewarded task. Renown always means fortune in Paris. That excellent girl forgot herself for me, she shared my life in all its caprices, and her economy enabled us to live comfortably upon my moderate means, I had more money for my whims when there were two of us than when I was alone. Those were my best days, monsieur. I worked zealously, I had an object, I was encouraged; I attributed my thoughts and my acts to a person who knew how to make me love her, and, better still, to inspire in me profound esteem by the prudence she displayed in a position where prudence seems impossible. But all my days were exactly alike, monsieur! That monotonous happiness, the most delightful condition imaginable, whose true value is appreciated only after one has experienced all the tempests of the heart—that sweet state in which the fatigue of living is no more, in which the

most secret thoughts are exchanged, in which one is understood: ah! to a man of ardent temperament, hungry for social distinctions, who had wearied of pursuing fame because it moves too slowly, to such a man that sort of happiness was soon a burden. My former dreams assailed me anew. I had a fierce longing for the pleasures of wealth, and demanded them in the name of love. I frankly expressed these desires one evening, when I was questioned by a loving voice just at the moment when, in pensive and melancholy mood, I was absorbed in the delights of imaginary wealth. Doubtless my remarks made the poor creature wince who had sacrificed herself to my welfare. To her it was the bitterest of sorrows to have me wish for something that she could not give on the instant. Oh! monsieur, the devotion of woman is sublime!"

That exclamation from the physician was called forth by some secret bitterness of spirit, for he fell into a brief reverie which Genestas did not interrupt.

"Well, monsieur," Benassis resumed, "an event which should have consummated that inchoate marriage destroyed it, and was the prime cause of my misfortunes. My father died, leaving a considerable fortune; the settlement of his estate required my presence for some months in Languedoc, and I went there alone. Thus I resumed my liberty. Any sort of obligation, even the least oppressive, is a burden when one is young: one must have had experience of life to realize the necessity of a yoke and

of work. With all the vivacity of a Languedocian, I enjoyed the going in and out without having to account for my acts to anybody, even of my own free will. If I did not entirely forget the ties I had contracted, I was occupied with affairs which diverted my mind from them, and the memory of them insensibly grew fainter. I could not think, without an unpleasant sensation, of resuming them on my return; then I would ask myself why I should resume them. Meanwhile, I received letters bearing the stamp of true affection; but, at twenty-two, a young man fancies that all women are equally affectionate; he does not as yet know how to distinguish between the heart and passion; he confounds everything with the sensations of pleasure, which seem at first to include everything; not until later, when I was better acquainted with men and things, was I able to appreciate the genuine nobleness of those letters, in which no thought of self was mingled with the expression of the writer's feelings, in which she rejoiced for my sake in my good fortune, in which she deplored it on her own account, in which there was no word suggesting that I could ever change, because she knew that she was incapable of changing. But I was already deep in ambitious schemes, and thinking of plunging into the joys of the wealthy, of becoming a personage, of making a fine match. I contented myself with saying: 'She loves me dearly!' with the cool fatuity of a coxcomb. Already I was perplexed to know how I should get clear of that liaison. That perplexity, that shame, led to brutality; to avoid

blushing before his victim, the man who has begun by wounding her, kills her. The reflections I have since indulged in concerning those days of sad mistakes have revealed to me several abysses of the heart. Believe me, monsieur, the persons who have probed deepest the vices and virtues of human nature are those who have studied them in themselves with good faith. One's conscience is the starting-point. We reason from ourselves to other men, never from other men to ourselves. When I returned to Paris, I took up my abode in a house which I had hired through an agent, without a word of warning either of my change of domicile or of my return, to the only person who was interested. I desired to play a leading part among the young men of fashion.

"After I had enjoyed for some days the first delights of opulence, and when I was sufficiently intoxicated with them to be sure of not weakening, I went to call upon the poor creature whom I proposed to abandon. With the aid of the natural shrewdness of woman, she divined my secret sentiments and concealed her tears from me. She must have despised me; but she was always sweet and affectionate, and never gave any sign of contempt. That indulgence tortured me cruelly. We assassins of the salon or the highway like to have our victims defend themselves, for then the struggle seems to justify their death. At first I ostentatiously resumed my visits. If I was not affectionate, I tried to appear amiable; then I insensibly became coldly polite; one day, by a sort of tacit agreement, she allowed me to treat her as

a stranger, and I thought that I had acted very properly. Nevertheless, I plunged almost with frenzy into society, in order to stifle in its festivities what little remorse I still felt. The man who does not esteem himself cannot bear to live alone, so I led the dissipated life that young men of wealth lead in Paris. As I had an excellent education and a good memory, I seemed to have more intellect than I really had, and thereupon fancied myself superior to my fellows: those persons who were interested in proving to me that I was a superior creature found me convinced of it beforehand. This superiority was so readily acknowledged that I did not even take the pains to demonstrate it. Of all the underhand devices known to the world, praise is the most adroitly treacherous. At Paris, especially, politicians of every sort know how to stifle talent at its birth by tossing a profusion of wreaths into its cradle. So that I did not do honor to my reputation, I did not take advantage of my popularity to make an opening for myself, nor did I form any profitable connections. I indulged in countless frivolities of all sorts. I enjoyed some of those ephemeral passions which are the shame of Parisian salons, where everyone goes about in search of a genuine passion, becomes surfeited while in pursuit of it, becomes a fashionable libertine, and reaches a point where he is as much surprised at a real passion as the world at a noble action. I imitated the rest, I frequently wounded innocent and noble-minded souls by the same blows that secretly tortured myself.

"Notwithstanding these false appearances, which caused me to be judged unfavorably, there was within me an unconquerable delicacy of feeling which I always obeyed. I was deceived on many occasions when I should have blushed not to be, and I discredited myself by the good faith for which I inwardly applauded myself.—In truth, the world has great respect for cleverness in whatever guise it shows itself. So far as the world is concerned, the result determines the law in everything. So it attributed to me vices and virtues, triumphs and defeats, which I did not deserve; it gave me credit for successes in the line of making love of which I knew nothing; it blamed me for actions of which I had never heard. Through pride I disdained to contradict the slanders, and through self-esteem I accepted falsehoods that were favorable to me. My life was apparently happy, in reality, wretched. Except for the disasters that soon burst upon me, I should gradually have lost all my good qualities and allowed the evil ones to triumph by the constant activity of my passions, by excessive indulgence in pleasures which weaken the body, and by the detestable habits of selfishness which wear out the springs of the mind. I ruined myself. This is how I did it. In Paris, however great a man's fortune may be, he always falls in with a greater one which he takes for his objective point and which he tries to surpass. Defeated in that contest, as so many other scatterbrains have been, I was obliged, after four years, to sell some securities and pledge others.

Then I received a terrible blow. For nearly two years I had not seen the young woman I had abandoned; but at the rate at which I was going, misfortune would doubtless have sent me back to her. One night, in the midst of a merry party, I received a note, scrawled by a feeble hand, and containing nearly these words:

"'I have only a few moments to live; I would like to see you, my friend, to find out what my child's fate is to be, whether he is to be your child; and also to soften the regret you might some day feel for my death.'

"That letter froze my blood, it revealed the secret pangs of the past, even as it concealed the mysteries of the future. I went out on foot, not waiting for my carriage, and walked all the way across Paris, driven by my remorse, in the grasp of a violent first impulse, which became a lasting sentiment as soon as I saw my victim. The exquisite neatness beneath which her poverty concealed itself depicted the intense suffering of her life: she spared my shame by referring to it with noble reserve when I had solemnly promised to adopt our child. That woman died, monsieur, in spite of all the care and attention I lavished upon her, in spite of all the resources of science to which I appealed in vain. Those attentions, that belated devotion, served only to make her last moments less bitter. She had worked incessantly in order to support and bring up her child. The maternal sentiment had been strong enough to sustain her against poverty, but not

against the most poignant of her sorrows, my desertion. A hundred times she had tried to communicate with me, a hundred times her pride had held her back; she contented herself with weeping, but without cursing me, reflecting that of all the gold poured forth in floods to gratify my caprices not a single drop was diverted from its course by a memory, to fall into her poor household and assist in keeping life in a mother and her child. That terrible misfortune had seemed to her the natural punishment of her sin. Assisted by a kind-hearted priest from Saint-Sulpice, whose indulgent voice had restored her tranquillity, she had gone to the altar to wipe her tears away and to find hope. The flood of bitterness poured into her heart by me had gradually abated. One day, upon hearing her son say: '*Father,*' a word that she had not taught him, she forgave me for her sin. But in tears and sorrow, in hard work, night and day, her health had failed. Religion brought her too late its consolation and the courage to endure the hardships of life. She was attacked by a disease of the heart, caused by her mental suffering, by the constant anticipation of my return, a hope always disappointed, but always renewed. At last, realizing that she was *in extremis*, she had written me from her death-bed those few words, entirely free from reproach, and dictated by religion, but partly also by her belief in my kindness. She knew, she said, that I was blind rather than wicked; she went so far as to accuse herself of having carried her womanly pride too far.

"'If I had written sooner,' she said, 'perhaps we should have had time to legitimize our child by being married.'

"She desired that ceremony only for her son's sake, and would not have asked it had she not felt that it was already dissolved by death. But there was not time, she had only a few hours to live. Beside that bed, monsieur, where I learned to know the value of a devoted heart, my sentiments underwent a lasting transformation. I was at an age when there are still tears in the eyes. During the last days of that precious life, my words, my actions, and my tears attested the repentance of a man stricken to the heart. I recognized too late the exceptional nature which the trivialities of society, the emptiness, the egotism of women of fashion, had taught me to desire, to seek. Weary of looking at so many masks, weary of listening to so many falsehoods, I had summoned the true love of which artificial passions made me dream; I admired it as it lay there, slain by me, powerless to detain it by my side although it was so wholly mine. An experience of four years had revealed to me my real character. My disposition, the nature of my imagination, my religious principles, sleeping rather than destroyed, the character of my mind, my misunderstood heart, everything about me had disposed me, for some time past, to solve the problem of my life by joys of the heart, and the problem of passion by family joys, the most real of all. The result of struggling about in the void of an agitated, purposeless

existence, of forcing pleasures that are always lacking in the sentiments that should embellish them, was that the images of domestic life aroused my liveliest emotions. Thus the revolution that took place in my habits was lasting, although sudden. My southern nature, adulterated by residence in Paris, would certainly have led me to feel no pity for the fate of a poor betrayed girl, and I should have laughed at her sorrows if some jocose friend had described them to me in merry company; in France, the feeling of horror for a crime always disappears in the glamour of a witty remark; but in presence of that divine creature against whom I could bring no reproach, all subtleties of reasoning held their peace: the coffin was there, and my child smiled at me, not knowing that I had murdered his mother.

"That woman died, she died happy in the assurance that I loved her, and that that new love was due neither to pity nor even to the bond that united us by force. Never shall I forget those last hours when love regained and satisfied motherhood imposed silence on pain. The abundance, the luxury with which she was surrounded, the delight of her child, who seemed lovelier in the pretty garb of childhood, were pledges of a happy future for the little creature in whom she seemed to see herself living anew. The vicar of Saint-Sulpice, observing my despair, made it even more profound by offering me no trite consolation, but enforcing upon me the serious nature of my obligations; but I needed no spur, my conscience talked loudly enough. A

woman had entrusted herself to me with noble confidence, and I had lied to her, telling her that I loved her when I was deceiving her; I had caused all the misery and suffering of a poor girl who, after she had accepted the humiliations of the world, should have been sacred to me; she died forgiving me, forgetting all her wrongs, because she placed her trust in the word of a man who had already broken his word to her. After giving me her faith as a girl, Agathe had found in her heart a mother's faith to give me. O monsieur, that child! her child!—God alone can know what he was to me. The dear little fellow was, like his mother, charming in his movements, in his words, in his ideas; but, in my eyes, he was something more than a mere child! Was he not my pardon, my honor? I loved him as a father, I determined also to love him as his mother would have loved him, and to transform my remorse into happiness, if I could succeed in making him believe that he had not ceased to lie upon his mother's breast; thus I was bound to him by all human ties and by all pious hopes. I had in my heart all the doting fondness that God has implanted in mothers. That child's voice sent a thrill through me, I would stand a long while and watch him as he lay asleep, with a delight that was constantly renewed, and a tear often fell on his forehead; I had accustomed him to come and say his prayers in my bed as soon as he waked. What sweet emotion did the simple words of '*Our Father*' cause me from the child's pure, rosy lips! but what

painful emotion as well! One morning, after '*Our Father who art in Heaven—*' he stopped.

"'Why not "*Our Mother?*"' he asked me.

"That question floored me. I adored my son and I had already sown in his life many seeds of unhappiness. Although the laws have recognized the sins of youth, and have almost protected them by hesitatingly bestowing a legal existence on natural children, society has fortified the repugnance of the law by insurmountable prejudices. From that period, monsieur, date my serious reflections on the foundation of societies, their machinery, the duties of man, and the moral principles which should animate the citizen. Genius embraces, first of all, the bonds between the sentiment of man and the destinies of society; religion inspires in virtuous minds the principles essential to happiness; but repentance alone dictates them to impetuous imaginations: repentance enlightened me. I lived only for a child, and through that child I was led to reflect upon the great social questions. I resolved to arm him beforehand with all the elements of success, in order to assure his elevation. For instance, to teach him English, German, Italian, and Spanish, I provided him in succession with a tutor in each of those languages, in each case a native of the country in question, who was instructed to teach him, while he was still a mere child, the pronunciation of the language. I was overjoyed to discover in him a most promising disposition to learn, of which I took advantage to instruct him while amusing him. I was determined

that not a single false idea should find its way into his mind; I sought, above all, to accustom him betimes to exercise his intelligence, to give him that swift and sure perception which enables one to generalize, and that patience which enables one to delve among the most trivial details of a specialty; lastly, I taught him to suffer and to hold his peace. I would not allow an impure or even an unseemly word to be pronounced before him. Through my efforts, the men and the objects by which he was surrounded contributed to ennoble him, to elevate his mind, to instill in him the love of the true, a horror of falsehood, to make him simple and natural in word and act and manner. The vivacity of his imagination enabled him to grasp object-lessons quickly, while the aptitude of his intelligence made his other studies easy for him. What a charming plant to cultivate! What joy mothers have! I understood then how his mother had been able to live and endure her unhappiness.

"That, monsieur, was the most momentous event in my life, and I come now to the catastrophe that drove me headlong to this canton. I am about to tell you now the most commonplace, the simplest story imaginable, but to me the most terrible.

"After devoting all my energies for several years to the child of whom I wished to make a man, my solitary life began to alarm me; my son was growing fast, he would soon turn his back upon me. In my mind love was a fundamental principle of existence. I felt a craving for affection which, being

always ungratified, sprang up again stronger than before, and increased with age. At that time all the elements of a genuine affection were united in my person. I had been put to the proof, I appreciated the joys of constancy, and the happiness of transforming a sacrifice into a pleasure; and the woman whom I loved was certain to be always first in my thoughts and my acts. I took pleasure in imagining a love that had attained that degree of certainty in which the emotions it arouses have penetrated both so thoroughly that happiness has become a part of their lives, their glances, their words, and no longer causes any shock. Love is then a part of life as religious feeling is a part of the soul, it animates it, supports it, enlightens it. I understood conjugal love otherwise than most men understand it, and I considered that its beauty, its magnificence, are found in those very things that cause its death in innumerable families. I felt keenly the moral grandeur of a dual life so intimately shared that the most commonplace actions should no longer be an obstacle to the perpetuity of sentiments. But where could one find two hearts whose pulsations were so perfectly synchronous—pardon me that scientific expression—as to make that celestial union possible? If such exist, nature or chance places them so far apart that they cannot meet, they know each other too late, or are parted too soon by death. That fatality must have some significance, but I have never tried to fathom it. I suffer too much from my wound to study it. Perhaps perfect happiness

is a monstrosity that would not perpetuate our species.

"My eagerness for a marriage of that kind was heightened by other causes. I had no friends. To me the world was a desert. There is something in me that is opposed to the alluring phenomenon of the union of souls. Some persons have sought me, but nothing would make them seem near to me, strive as I might to become attached to them. With many men I imposed silence on what the world calls my superiority; I kept step with them, I espoused their ideas, I laughed when they laughed, I made excuses for the defects in their character; if I had won renown, I would have sold it to them for a little affection. Those men left me without regret. In Paris everything is a snare and an affliction to hearts that try to find genuine sentiments there. Wherever I placed my feet in society, the ground seemed to burn all around me. To some my passivity seemed weakness; if I showed them the claws of a man who felt that he possessed the strength to handle the reins of power some day, I was wicked. To others the delightful laugh which ceases at twenty years and in which we are almost ashamed to indulge later was a subject of raillery—I amused them. In our day, society is bored and yet insists upon solemnity in the most trivial conversation. A horrible period, when people bow down before a cold, polished man of mediocre talent, whom everyone hates, but whom everyone obeys! I discovered later the explanation of this apparent inconsistency.

"Mediocrity, monsieur, is a sufficient equipment every hour of one's life; it is the every-day garb of society; whoever emerges from the pleasant shadow cast by mediocre people is, in a certain sense, too brilliant; genius, originality, are jewels which one stores away and keeps for adornment on certain great days. In short, monsieur, being alone in the midst of Paris, unable to find anything in society, which gave nothing back to me when I gave it all I had; having in my child not enough to satisfy my heart, because I was a man: one day, when I felt that my life was growing cold, that I was bending beneath the burden of my secret miseries, I met the woman through whom I was to become acquainted with love in its most violent form, and to respect acknowledged love, love with its fruitful hopes of happiness,—in a word, love!

"I had renewed my acquaintance with my father's old friend, who formerly had charge of my interests: it was at his house that I met the young woman for whom I conceived a passion which was to endure as long as my life. The older a man grows, monsieur, the more fully he recognizes the influences of ideas upon events. Eminently respectable prejudices, engendered by noble religious ideas, were the cause of my misfortunes. This young woman belonged to an extremely devout family, whose Catholic opinions were attributable to the influence of a sect improperly called Jansenists, which formerly caused much disturbance in France; do you know why?"

"No," said Genestas.

"Jansenius, Bishop of Ypres, wrote a book which was alleged to contain propositions not in accord with the doctrines of the Holy See. Later, those propositions as they were actually written did not seem heretical, and some authors went so far as to deny the material existence of the maxims. These meaningless discussions caused two factions to appear in the Gallican church, the Jansenists and the Jesuits. There were great men ranged on both sides. It was a struggle between two powerful bodies. The Jansenists accused the Jesuits of inculcating a too loose system of morals, and affected excessive purity both of morals and principles; thus the Jansenists were a sort of Catholic Puritans, if the two words can properly be placed side by side.

"During the French Revolution, as a result of the unimportant schism produced by the Concordat, a congregation of pure Catholics was formed, who did not recognize the bishops appointed by the revolutionary authorities and by the Pope's compromises. That flock of the faithful constituted what was called the *Little Church*, whose members professed, like the Jansenists, that exemplary regularity of life which seems to be a rule necessary to the existence of proscribed and persecuted sects. Several Jansenist families belonged to the Little Church. The parents of the girl in question had embraced those two puritanisms, equally strict, which impart an imposing aspect to the character and the features; for it is the peculiar property of uncompromising doctrines to magnify the simplest actions by dwelling upon their

relation to the future life: hence that superb and pleasing purity of heart, that respect for others and themselves; hence an indefinably delicate sense of the just and the unjust; an abounding charity, too, but also a strict and, if I may say so, implacable equity; and, lastly, a deep-rooted horror of vice, especially of falsehood, which includes all vices. I cannot remember that I ever knew more delightful moments than those at my old friend's house when I saw for the first time a genuine, bashful maiden, accustomed to implicit obedience, in whom all the virtues peculiar to that sect shone resplendent, although she displayed no pride in their possession. Her slender little figure gave to her movements a charm which her puritanical ways could not diminish; her face had the distinguished contour, and her features the refinement, of a young woman of noble birth; her glance was at once sweet and reserved; her brow was unruffled; and her abundant hair, dressed with great simplicity, answered all the purposes, unknown to her, of a tiara.

"In short, captain, she was in my eyes the type of the perfection we always find in the woman with whom we are in love; in order to love her we must find in her the elements of the beauty of which we have dreamed and which accords with our special ideas. When I spoke to her, she answered simply, without forwardness or false modesty, knowing nothing of the pleasure caused by the harmony between her voice and her external gifts. All those angels have the same marks by which the heart

recognizes them: the same sweet voice, the same tender expression, the same fair complexion, something attractive in the gesture. Those qualities harmonize with one another, blend and unite to charm us, although we cannot say in what the charm consists. A divine soul makes itself manifest in every movement. I loved her passionately. That love awoke and satisfied the sentiments by which I was agitated: ambition, wealth, in a word, all my dreams! Lovely, of noble birth, rich and well-bred, that girl possessed all the advantages which society arbitrarily demands of a woman in the lofty position I was determined to attain; her education enabled her to express herself with the witty eloquence that is so rare and yet so common in France, where, in the mouths of many women, the highest remarks seem meaningless, whereas in her case, wit was full of good sense. Lastly, she had a profound consciousness of her own dignity, which compelled respect; I know of no more estimable quality in a wife.

"I desist, captain! one must always describe most inadequately a woman one loves; between her and ourselves there are pre-existent mysteries which defy analysis. I soon confided in my old friend, who introduced me to her family, and gave me the support of his respectable authority. Although received at first with the cold courtesy peculiar to exclusive people, who never abandon a friend when they have once adopted him, I succeeded eventually in being received on a familiar footing. I owed that

evidence of regard doubtless to my conduct at that crisis. Despite my passion, I did nothing that could disgrace me in my own eyes, I was guilty of no servile obsequiousness, I did not fawn on those upon whom my destiny depended, I showed myself as I was, a man before everything. When my character was well understood, my old friend, who was as desirous as myself to see the end of my unhappy bachelorhood, spoke of my hopes, which were listened to favorably, but with the shrewd reserve which people in society seldom lay aside; and in his eagerness to procure for me a *good match*, an expression which places an act of such solemnity on a level with a species of commercial transaction in which the prospective husband or wife seeks to deceive the other, the old man said nothing about what he called an error of my youth. In his view, a knowledge of my child's existence would excite a moral repulsion in comparison with which the question of fortune would be of no consequence, and which would inevitably lead to a rupture. He was right.

"'It will be an easy matter to arrange between yourself and your wife,' he said to me, 'and you will readily obtain full and free absolution from her.'

"In fact, in his zeal to quiet my scruples, he neglected none of the specious arguments which ordinary worldly wisdom suggests. I will confess, monsieur, that, in spite of my promise, my first impulse led me to disclose everything frankly to the head of the family; but his stern puritanism

made me reflect, and the probable consequences of the disclosure terrified me; I made a cowardly compromise with my conscience, I determined to wait, and to obtain from my intended bride such pledges of attachment that my happiness would not be endangered by that appalling revelation. My determination to confess everything at an opportune moment justified the worldly old man's sophistries and those of society at large. I was, therefore, without the knowledge of the friends of the family, received by the young woman's parents as her future husband. The most marked characteristic of such devout families is unlimited reserve, and they maintain silence on all subjects, even those of little consequence. You cannot imagine, monsieur, what depth of feeling results from that charming gravity, displayed even in the most trivial acts. In that house everybody was engaged in some useful occupation; the women employed their leisure making clothes for the poor; the conversation was not frivolous, but laughter was not tabooed, although the jesting was simple and not sarcastic. The talk of those rigidly orthodox people seemed strange at first, being devoid of the piquancy that slander and scandalous anecdotes impart to the conversation of society; for only the father and uncle read the newspapers, and my betrothed had never cast an eye on one of those sheets, the most harmless of which deal with crimes and public vices; but later the mind felt, in that pure atmosphere, the impression that our eyes receive from grayish tints, a pleasant sense of repose,

a soothing calm. In appearance theirs was a horribly monotonous life. There was something glacial in the aspect of the inside of that house: day after day I saw all the furniture, even that which was most used, placed in exactly the same position, and the smallest objects always equally spotless. Nevertheless, that mode of life exercised a powerful attraction. After I had overcome the first repugnance of a man accustomed to the pleasures of variety, of Parisian luxury and activity, I recognized the advantages of that kind of life; it develops one's ideas to their fullest extent and provokes involuntary contemplation; the heart reigns supreme, nothing distracts its attention, it ends by discovering there something as vast as the ocean. There, as in a cloister, the thought, as it constantly comes in contact with the same things, necessarily turns aside from things toward the infinite regions of sentiments.

"To a man as sincerely in love as I was, the silence and simplicity of the life, the almost monastic repetition of the same acts at the same hours, imparted greater force to love. In that profound tranquillity, the slightest movements, a word, a gesture, assumed extraordinary interest. Without forcing in any way the expression of the feelings, a smile, a glance, offer to hearts that understand each other, inexhaustible images to depict their joys and their miseries. So it was that I learned at that time that language, with all its magnificent phrases, has nothing so varied, so eloquent, as the correspondence of glances and the harmony of smiles. How many

times I have tried to put my whole heart into my eyes or on my lips, when I found myself obliged to hold my peace and at the same time to paint the violence of my passion to a girl who always sat unmoved in my presence, and to whom the secret cause of my frequent visits to the house had not been revealed; for her parents proposed to leave her perfectly free in the most important act of her life. But, when one is under the spell of a genuine passion, does not the presence of the loved one allay our most impetuous desires? when we are admitted to her presence, is not our happiness like that of the Christian before God? Does not seeing mean adoring? If it was a keener torture to me than to any other man to be unable to express the impulses of my heart; if I was forced to bury therein the burning words that betray more burning emotions by giving expression to them, nevertheless, that restraint, by imprisoning my passion, made it burst forth more ardently in little things, and the most trivial incidents acquired an excessive value. To admire for long hours, to await a reply and linger long over the modulations of her voice, seeking to decipher her most secret thoughts therein; to watch the trembling of her fingers when I handed her something she had been looking for, to invent pretexts for brushing against her dress or her hair, to take her hand, to make her talk more than she wanted to,—all such trifles were momentous events. During those trances, so to speak, the eyes, the gesture, the voice, carried to the mind unfamiliar evidences of love.

"Such was my language, the only language that the girl's cold maidenly reserve permitted me to adopt; for her manner did not change, with me she was always as a sister is with a brother; but, as my passion increased, the contrast between my words and hers, between my glances and hers, became more striking, and I realized at last that that bashful silence was the only means at her disposal of expressing her feelings. Was she not always in the salon when I arrived? did she not always remain during my anticipated call, of which she had a presentiment perhaps? Did not that silent devotion betray the secret of her innocent heart? Furthermore, did she not listen to what I said with a delight which she could not conceal? The ingenuousness of our conduct and the melancholy of our love eventually, I doubt not, troubled her parents' patience, and, seeing that I was almost as shy as their daughter, they formed a favorable opinion of me and looked upon me as a man worthy of their esteem. The father and mother confided in my old friend, said the most flattering things to him about me: I had become their son by adoption; they admired, especially, the morality of my sentiments. To be sure, at that time I had grown young again. In that pure, devout atmosphere, the man of thirty-two became once more the youth overflowing with faith.

"The summer was drawing to an end; the family had been detained in Paris contrary to their custom; but in the month of September they were free to leave the capital for a country estate in Auvergne,

and the father begged me to come and sojourn for two months in an old château in the heart of the mountains of Cantal. When that friendly invitation was extended to me, at first I made no reply. My hesitation was worth to me the sweetest, the most delightful of all the involuntary ejaculations by which a modest maiden can betray the mysteries of her heart. Evelina— My God!" cried Benassis, and he became pensive and silent.

"Forgive me, Captain Bluteau," he resumed after a long pause. "This is the first time in twelve years that I have uttered a name which is always fluttering about in my thoughts, and which a voice often calls out to me during my sleep. Evelina, then, since I have called her by name, raised her head with a movement whose abrupt suddenness was in striking contrast to the innate gentleness of her gestures under ordinary circumstances; she glanced at me, not proudly, but with sorrowful anxiety; she blushed and cast down her eyes. The moderation with which she lowered her eyelids caused me an indescribable pleasure I had never before known. I was unable to reply except in a faltering, broken voice. The emotion of my heart appealed eagerly to hers, and she thanked me with a sweet, almost tearful glance. We had said all that there was to be said.

"I went with the family to their country estate. From the day that we understood each other, our surroundings assumed a novel aspect; nothing was indifferent to us any longer. Although true love is

always the same, it must borrow its shape from our ideas, and thus find itself constantly like and unlike itself in each being whose passion becomes a product unique in itself, in which his or her sympathies are expressed. Only the philosopher and the poet realize the profundity of this definition of love, which has become trite: selfishness *à deux*. We love ourselves *in the other*. But if the method of expressing love varies so widely that no two pairs of lovers in all history have been precisely alike, it nevertheless follows the same rule in its periods of expansion. So that all young women, even the most chaste, the most religiously inclined, employ the same language, and differ only in the charm of their ideas. But where, in another woman, the ingenuous revelation of her emotions would have been natural, Evelina saw a concession to unruly sentiments which carried the day over the habitual placidity of her religious youth, and even the most stealthy glance seemed to be violently torn from her by love. That constant conflict between her heart and her principles gave to the least momentous incidents of her life, which was so tranquil on the surface and in reality so profoundly agitated, a forceful character far superior to the exaggerations of many girls whose manners are early perverted by worldly morals. During the journey, Evelina discovered beauties in nature of which she spoke with admiration. When we think that we are not entitled to express the joy caused by the loved one's presence, we turn the overflow of the sensations

with which our hearts are inundated upon the exterior objects which our hidden feelings embellish. The poetic beauty of the landscapes that passed before our eyes was to us two an interpreter whom we thoroughly understood, and the admiring words we bestowed on them expressed to our hearts the secret of our love. On several occasions Evelina's mother amused herself by embarrassing her daughter with mischievous suggestions characteristic of womankind.

"'You have passed through this valley twenty times without seeming to admire it particularly, my dear child!' she said, after a somewhat too enthusiastic remark from Evelina.

"'I suppose I was not old enough to appreciate natural beauties of this sort, mother.'

"Pardon this detail, which will hardly interest you, captain; but that reply, simple as it was, caused me indescribable joy, all due to the glance in my direction which accompanied it. So it was that a village illuminated by the setting sun, an ivy-covered ruin, at which we had gazed together, served to imprint more deeply in our hearts, by the memory of a material object, blissful emotions in which our whole future was involved.

"We arrived safely at the ancestral château, where I remained about forty days. That time, monsieur, is the only portion of perfect happiness that Heaven has ever vouchsafed to me. I experienced delights unknown to the denizens of cities. They comprised all the happiness that two

lovers have in living under the same roof, in marrying in anticipation, in walking together across the fields, in being able to be alone sometimes, in sitting under a tree in the heart of a charming little valley and gazing at some old mill, in snatching confidences, you know, from the delicious little chats by which you move forward a little every day in each other's heart. Ah! monsieur, the life in the open air, the beauties of earth and sky harmonize so perfectly with the joys and the perfection of the heart! To smile as you look up at the sky, to mingle simple words with the songs of the birds under the moist foliage, to walk slowly homeward listening to the clang of the bell that summons you too soon, to admire together some little detail of the landscape, to follow the capricious flight of an insect, to examine a golden-winged fly, a fragile creature, in the hand of a pure and loving maiden, is to be drawn every day a little nearer Heaven.

"In those forty days of bliss there was the material of memories to color my whole life, memories the sweeter and more far-reaching because it was my destiny never to be understood afterward. To-day images apparently unmeaning, but full of bitter significance for a broken heart, have reminded me of a vanished but not forgotten love. I do not know whether you noticed the effect of the sunset on little Jacques's cottage? In an instant the fiery rays of the sun made all nature resplendent, then the landscape suddenly became dismal and dark. Those two widely contrasted aspects presented to my mind a

faithful picture of that period of my history. Monsieur, I received from her the first, the sublime and only testimony of her love which an innocent girl can give, and which binds the faster the more furtively it is given: love's sweet promise, a souvenir of the language spoken in a better world! Thereupon, sure that I was loved, I made a vow to tell everything, to have no secret from her; I was ashamed that I had delayed so long to tell her of the wretchedness I had created for myself. Unfortunately, on the day following that day of bliss, a letter from my son's tutor made me tremble for a life that was very dear to me. I went away without telling Evelina my secret, giving the family no other excuse than that of important business.

"In my absence her parents became alarmed. Fearing that my heart might be subject to some prior claim, they wrote to Paris to make inquiries about me. Although such conduct was inconsistent with their religious principles, they distrusted me, without giving me an opportunity to dissipate their suspicions; one of their friends enlightened them, without my knowledge, as to the events of my youth, put my errors in the worst possible light, dwelling upon the existence of my child, which, he said, I had purposely concealed. When I wrote to my future parents, I received no reply; they returned to Paris, I called upon them and was not admitted. Alarmed beyond measure, I sent my old friend to ascertain the cause of conduct which I was

utterly unable to explain. When he learned the cause, the excellent old man sacrificed himself nobly; he assumed the whole responsibility for my silence, strove earnestly to justify me, but could effect nothing. Considerations of interest and morality were too grave in the sight of that family, their prejudices were too deeply rooted to make it possible to change their determination. My despair knew no bounds. At first I tried to turn aside the storm; but my letters were returned to me unopened.

"When all human means were exhausted; when the father and mother had informed the old man who was responsible for my misfortune that they would never consent to give their daughter to a man who had on his conscience the death of a woman and the life of a natural child, even although Evelina implored them on her knees to relent, then, monsieur, but one last hope was left to me, a hope as fragile as the willow branch to which a poor devil clings when he is drowning. I dared to believe that Evelina's love would be stronger than her parents' resolution, and that she would be able to overcome their inflexibility; her father might have concealed from her the reasons for the refusal which slew our love, and I proposed that she should decide my fate with full knowledge of the facts; so I wrote to her. Alas! monsieur, in tears and sorrow, I wrote, not without cruel hesitation, the only love-letter I have ever written. I have but a vague remembrance to-day of the words that despair dictated; doubtless I told

my Evelina that, if she were sincere and true, she could not, must not, ever love any other man than me; otherwise, would not her life be a failure, must she not lie to her future husband unless she had lied to me? would she not betray all womanly virtues by refusing to her misunderstood lover the same devotion she would have bestowed upon him if the marriage consummated in our hearts had been actually celebrated? and what woman would not adore the thought that she was more firmly bound by the promises of the heart than by the chains of the law? I justified my sins by appealing to all the purity of innocence, neglecting nothing that was likely to touch a noble, generous heart. But, as I am telling you the whole story, I will go and get her reply and my last letter," said Benassis, leaving the room to go up to his own bedroom.

He soon returned, holding in his hand a worn portfolio, from which, not without deep emotion, he took several papers, arranged in no order, which trembled in his hands.

"Here is the fatal letter," he said. "The child who formed these characters had no idea of the importance to me of the paper that contains her thoughts. This," he continued, indicating another letter, "is the last cry that was torn from me by my suffering, and you shall pass judgment on it in a moment. My old friend took charge of my petition, delivered it secretly, humiliated his white locks by begging Evelina to read it, to reply to it; and this is what she wrote me:

EVELINA TO M. BENASSIS

"My old friend took charge of my petition, delivered it secretly, humiliated his white locks by begging Evelina to read it, to reply to it; and this is what she wrote me:

"'MONSIEUR,' * * *

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"'MONSIEUR,' * * *

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"'MONSIEUR,'

"She called me, who so short a time before had been her *beloved*, a chaste name employed by her to express a chaste love—she called me *monsieur!* That one word told the whole story. But listen to the letter:

"'It is very hard for a young girl to find that the man to whom her life was to be entrusted has been false to her; still, I surely ought to forgive you, we are so weak! Your letter has touched me, but do not write to me any more, your writing causes me distress that I cannot endure. We are separated forever. The reasons you gave me convinced me and stifled the feeling that had risen in my heart against you, it gave me such joy to believe that you were pure! But you and I are too weak in opposition to my father! Yes, monsieur, I dared to speak in your favor. Before appealing to my parents I had to overcome the greatest terror that I ever knew, and almost to give the lie to all the habits of my life. Now I yield once more to your entreaties, and do what I know to be wrong in writing to you without my father's knowledge; but my mother knows it: her indulgence in leaving me alone for a moment with you proves to me how dearly she loves me, and confirms me in my respect for the wishes of my family, which I was very near failing to understand. And so, monsieur, I write to you for the first and last time. I forgive you unreservedly for the unhappiness you have brought into my life. Yes, you are right, a first love never wholly disappears. I am no longer a pure maiden, I could not be a chaste wife. Therefore I do not know what my fate will be. You see, monsieur, the year of my life that has been filled by you will echo for a long while in my future; but I do not accuse you.—I shall always be loved! why tell me so? will those words soothe the agitated heart of a poor lonely girl? Have you not already destroyed my future life by sowing memories that will constantly return? If I can give myself absolutely to Jesus now,

will He accept a broken heart? But He has not visited this affliction upon me for no purpose, He has his designs, and wished doubtless to call me to Him, to Him, my only refuge to-day. Nothing is left me on this earth, monsieur. You have all the ambitions natural to man to dispel your disappointment. I do not mean that as a reproach, but as a sort of religious consolation. It seems to me that I have a heavier portion of the cruel burden we are bearing at this moment. HE in whom I have placed all my hope, and of whom you cannot be jealous, has bound our lives together; He will find a way to unbind them according to His will. I have noticed that your religious beliefs were not grounded on the pure and living faith which helps us to endure our trials here on earth. Monsieur, if God deigns to grant a fervent and constant prayer, He will grant you the blessings of His light. Adieu, you who should have been my guide, whom I have called my *beloved* without sin, and for whom I can still pray without shame. God disposes of our lives at His pleasure, He may summon you first of us two; but if I should be left alone in the world, oh! monsieur, entrust that child to me.'

"That letter, overflowing with noble sentiments, dashed my hopes to the ground," said Benassis. "And so at first I listened only to my grief; later, I breathed the perfume of the balm that girl had tried to pour upon my wounds, forgetful of herself; but, in my despair, I wrote her a little harshly:

"'MADEMOISELLE,

"'That one word tells you that I obey you and give you up! A man finds an indefinable ghastly sweetness in obeying the woman he loves, even when she bids him leave her. You are right, and I condemn myself. Long ago I failed to appreciate a young girl's devotion, it is just that my passion should be unappreciated to-day. But I did not think that the only woman to whom I had given my heart would take it upon

herself to wreak that revenge. I should never have suspected the possibility of so much cruelty, so much virtue perhaps, in a heart that seemed to me so tender and so loving. I have but just realized the extent of my love, it has survived the most excruciating of all pangs, the contempt that you manifest for me in shattering without regret the bonds by which we were united. Adieu forever. I retain the humble pride of repentance and am about to seek a station in which I can expiate the sins for which you, my interpreter in heaven, have had no mercy. God, perhaps, will be more merciful than you. My sufferings, sufferings full of you, will chastise a wounded heart which will continue to bleed in solitude; for shadow and silence are for wounded hearts. No other image of love will ever be imprinted on my heart. Although I am not a woman, I understood when I said to you: "*I love you!*" that I pledged myself for my whole life. No, those words uttered in the ear of *my beloved* were not a lie; if I could change, she would be justified in her contempt; so you will be the idol of my solitude forever. Repentance and love are two virtues which should inspire all the others; and so, despite the gulf that separates us henceforth, you will always be the moving principle of my acts. Although you have filled my heart with bitterness, no bitter thoughts against you will find a lodgment there; it would be a bad beginning of my new work not to cleanse my heart of all leaven. Adieu, then, to the only heart I love on this earth, the heart from which I have been driven forth! Never will the word have expressed deeper sentiments, or greater tenderness; for does it not bear away from me a heart and a life which it is in no man's power to bring back? Adieu! To you peace, to me all the unhappiness!'"

When the two letters had been read, Genestas and Benassis looked at each other for a moment, under the spell of sad thoughts which they did not impart to each other.

"After I had sent this last letter, of which, as you

see, I retained the rough draft, which represents to-day all my joys,—joys that are withered now,"—resumed Benassis, "I fell into an indescribably depressed condition. All the bonds that can attach a man to life on this earth were united in that chaste hope, thenceforth and forever blasted. I must bid farewell to the joys of legitimate love, and allow the generous ideas that were taking root in the depths of my heart to perish. The cravings of a repentant soul, thirsty for the beautiful, the honorable, the good, were denied by people of genuine piety. For a moment, monsieur, my mind was agitated by the most extravagant resolutions, but luckily the sight of my son subdued them. I felt my affection for him increase by all the misery of which he was the innocent cause, but for which I could blame no one but myself. He became, therefore, my only consolation. At the age of thirty-four I could still hope to be useful to my country in some noble way; I determined to become a celebrated man, in order to efface by my renown, or by the glamour of power, the sin which stained my son's birth. How many noble sentiments do I owe to him, and what zest he added to life during the time that my mind was occupied with his future!—I am suffocating!" cried Benassis. "After eleven years, I cannot even yet bear to think of that terrible year.—Monsieur, I lost that child!"

The doctor ceased to speak, and hid his face in his hands, which he removed again when he had recovered his tranquillity somewhat. Genestas was

unable to restrain his emotion at sight of the tears which filled his host's eyes.

"Monsieur, that thunderbolt uprooted me at first," continued Benassis. "I did not bask in the light of healthy morals until after I was transplanted into other soil than that of the social world. I did not recognize until later the hand of God in my misfortunes, and later I was able to resign myself by listening to His voice. But my resignation was long in coming, my excitable nature was bound to awake again; I expended the last flashes of my impetuosity in one last outbreak, I hesitated a long time before choosing the only course that it befits a Catholic to adopt. At first I was determined to kill myself. As everything that had happened had tended to develop the sentiment of melancholy in me beyond all measure, I decided upon that act of despair in cold blood. I thought that we were justified in turning our backs upon life, when life had turned its back upon us. Suicide seemed to me perfectly natural. Sorrow certainly causes in the soul of man the same ravages that intense pain causes in his body; now, an intelligent being, suffering from a mental disease, surely has the right to kill himself, just as the lamb suffering from *tournis* beats out his brains against a tree. Are ills of the mind more readily cured than bodily ills? I still doubt it. I cannot say which is the more cowardly, the man who always hopes or the man who abandons hope. Suicide seems to me to be the last paroxysm of a mental disease, just as natural death is of physical disease; but, as

mental life is subject to the special laws of the human will, should not its cessation be in accord with the manifestations of the intelligence? So that it is the thought that does the killing, not the pistol. Moreover, does not the chance that strikes us down at the moment when life is all happiness absolve the man who refuses to drag out a wretched life? But, monsieur, my meditations during those days of mourning led my mind to loftier considerations.

"For some time I was a sharer in the noble sentiments of pagan antiquity; but, while seeking therein new privileges for man, I thought that I could, by the light of modern knowledge, go deeper than the ancients into the questions long ago reduced to philosophical systems. Epicurus believed in suicide. Indeed, it was the complement of his moral system, which demanded sensual enjoyment at any price; failing that essential condition, it was pleasant and permissible for the animate being to seek the repose of inanimate nature; man's only aim being happiness or the hope of happiness, death became a blessing to him who suffered and suffered without hope: to inflict death upon one's self voluntarily was the climax of common sense. He did not praise that act, he did not reprove it; he simply said, as he poured out a libation to Bacchus: '*Death is nothing to laugh at, nothing to weep about.*'

"More moral and more thoroughly imbued with the doctrine of duty than the Epicureans, Zeno and all the Portico enjoined suicide on the Stoic in certain cases. This is how they reasoned: Man differs

from the brute in that he has a sovereign right of disposal of his person; take away from him that right of life and death over himself, and you make him a slave of men and of events. That well-recognized right of life and death forms an effective counterpoise to all natural and social ills; that same right, when conferred upon man over his fellow-man, engenders all sorts of tyranny. The power of man, therefore, has no existence anywhere without unlimited freedom in his acts: if it is necessary to escape the shameful consequences of an irremediable fault, the ordinary man swallows his shame and lives, the wise man swallows hemlock and dies; if he must contend for the rest of his days with the gout which shatters his bones, with the cancer which eats into his face, the wise man deems the moment an opportune one, dismisses the quacks, and bids a final farewell to his friends, to whom his presence on earth is depressing. What is a man to do when he has fallen into the power of the tyrant whom he has fought with arms in his hand? the act of submission is prepared, it only remains to sign it or to bare your neck: the fool bares his neck, the coward signs, the wise man ends with a final act of freedom: he smites himself.

"'Free men,' cried the Stoic, 'see that ye remain free! Free from your passions by sacrificing them to your duties, free from your fellow-men by showing them the steel or the poison which places you out of reach of their assaults, free from destiny by fixing a point beyond which you will allow it to

retain no hold upon you, free from prejudices by not confusing them with duties, free from all animal apprehensions by learning to conquer the carnal instinct that binds so many wretched creatures to life.'

"Having stripped that reasoning of the philosophic jargon of the ancients, I fancied that I could impart a Christian form to it by confirming it with the laws of free will that God has given us in order to be able some day to pass judgment upon us before His judgment-seat, and I said to myself: 'I will support it with my voice!'—But, monsieur, those arguments forced me to think of the morrow of death, and I found myself at odds with my former shaken beliefs. When the thought of eternity weighs upon the least important of our resolutions, everything in life becomes a serious matter. When that thought acts with all its force upon a man's mind and gives him an indefinable impression of immensity within, which brings him in contact with the infinite, things undergo a singular change. From that point of view, life is a very great thing and a very small thing. The consciousness of my sins did not lead me to think of Heaven so long as I had hopes on earth, so long as I found relief for my sufferings in some social employments. To love, to devote myself to the happiness of a woman, to be the head of a family, was surely to nourish worthily my painful anxiety to expiate my smarting sins. That attempt having failed, was it not a further expiation to consecrate my life to a child? But when, after those two efforts of my heart,

contempt and death had put it in mourning forever, when all my feelings were wounded at once, and I could see nothing more on earth, I raised my eyes to heaven and saw God there. However, I tried to make religion share the responsibility for my death. I read the Gospels anew and found no passage there in which suicide is forbidden; but the reading filled my heart with the divine thought of the Saviour of mankind. To be sure, He says nothing there of the immortality of the soul, but He speaks of the beautiful kingdom of His Father; He nowhere forbids parricide, but He condemns everything that is wrong. The glory of His evangelists and the proof of their divine mission is not so much their having made laws as their having spread throughout the world the spirit of the new laws. Thereupon the courage that a man displays in killing himself seemed to me to be his own condemnation: when he feels that he has the strength to die, he should have the strength to struggle on; to refuse to suffer is not strength, but weakness; furthermore, to lay life aside from discouragement is to abjure the Christian faith which Jesus founded on the sublime words: '*Blessed are they who suffer!*' So that suicide no longer seemed to me justifiable under any circumstances, not even in the case of the man who, through a false conception of grandeur of soul, makes away with himself the moment before the headsman strikes him with his axe. By allowing himself to be crucified, Jesus Christ enjoined upon us all to obey all human laws even though they were unjustly enforced. The word *resignation*.

carved on the cross, so intelligible to all those who are able to read the sacred characters, appeared to me in its divine brilliancy.

"I still possessed eighty thousand francs; my first impulse was to go far away from mankind, to spend the rest of my life vegetating in the wilds of some country districts; but misanthropy, a species of vanity concealed beneath a hedgehog's skin, is not a Catholic virtue. A misanthrope's heart does not bleed, it contracts, and mine bled in all its veins. As I thought of the laws of the Church, of the resources it offers to the afflicted, I came to realize the beauty of prayer in solitude, and it became my fixed idea to *enter into religion*, according to the beautiful expression of our fathers. Although my mind was firmly made up, I reserved to myself, nevertheless, the privilege of scrutinizing the means I must employ in order to attain my end. Having turned the remnant of my fortune into cash, I left Paris, almost at peace. *Peace in the Lord* was a hope which could not betray me. Attracted at first by the regulations of Saint-Bruno, I came on foot to the Grande-Chartreuse, absorbed by serious thoughts. That was a solemn day to me. I had no anticipation of the majestic spectacle presented by the road I was to travel, where some superhuman power makes itself manifest at every step. The overhanging cliffs, the precipices, the mountain torrents whose voices one hears in the silence, the solitude bounded by lofty mountains and yet without bounds, that refuge to which naught of man attains

save his barren curiosity, that awful wilderness softened by the most picturesque creations of nature, those primeval firs and those plants of yesterday—all tend to induce gravity. It would be difficult to smile in passing through the desert of Saint-Bruno, for there the spirit of melancholy reigns triumphant. I saw the Grande-Chartreuse, I passed beneath those ancient silent arches, I heard the water from the spring falling drop by drop. I entered a cell to take the measure of my nothingness, I breathed the profound peace that my predecessor had enjoyed there, and I read with deep emotion the inscription he had placed over the door, according to the cloistral custom; all the precepts of the life I proposed to lead were summed up there by three Latin words: '*Fuge, late, tace*.'"

Genestas bowed as if he understood.

"I had decided," continued Benassis. "That cell with its wainscoting of fir, that hard bed, that seclusion, gratified my soul. The monks were in the chapel, I went there to pray with them. There my resolutions faded away. Monsieur, I do not propose to criticise the Catholic Church, I am very orthodox, I believe in its works and its laws. But, when I heard those old men, unknown to the world and dead to the world, intoning their prayers, I realized that there was a sort of sublime egotism in the depths of the cloister. That seclusion benefits only the individual and is nothing more than a long suicide. I do not condemn it, monsieur; if the Church has opened those tombs, they are doubtless

necessary for some Christians who are of no use to the world. I believed that I could do better by making my repentance beneficial to the social world. On my return, I devoted myself to considering under what conditions I could carry out my thoughts of resignation. Already I had, in imagination, led the life of a simple sailor, I had sentenced myself to serve my country by taking my place in the front rank in battle and renouncing forever all manifestations of the intellect; but, although it was a life of toil and self-sacrifice, it did not seem to me sufficiently useful. Was it not, in a measure, defeating the purposes of God? If He had endowed me with some mental force, was it not my duty to employ it for the welfare of my fellow-men? And then, if I may speak freely, I felt within me a craving for expansion that I cannot describe, a craving which purely mechanical obligations served only to wound. I saw in the sailor's life no pasturage for the kindness that results from my mental make-up, just as each flower gives forth its own special perfume. I was, as I have already told you, obliged to sleep here. During the night I fancied that I heard a command from God in the sympathetic thoughts inspired by the condition of this poor province. I had experienced the painful joys of maternity, I resolved to abandon myself to them absolutely, to satisfy that feeling in a more extended sphere than that of mothers, by becoming a sister of charity for a whole province, by constantly healing the sores of the poor. God's finger

seemed to me to have marked out my destiny in bold characters, when I reflected that the first serious thought of my youth had inclined me to the medical profession, and I determined to practise it here. I had said in my letter: '*for wounded hearts, shadow and silence;*' what I had promised myself to do, I determined to carry out. I had entered on the path of silence and resignation.

"The Carthusian's '*fuge, late, tace,*' is my motto here, my work is an active prayer, my moral suicide is the life of this district, where I take keen delight in sowing happiness and joy, in giving what I have not, by putting forth my hand. The habit of living with peasants, my separation from the world, have really transformed me. My face has changed in expression, it has accustomed itself to the sun, which has wrinkled and hardened it. I have acquired the carriage of a countryman, his speech, his costume, his free and easy manners, his ignorance of anything like dissimulation. My Parisian friends and the fine ladies whose cicisbeo I was would never recognize in me the man who was momentarily the fashion, the sybarite accustomed to the trivialities, the luxury, the refinements of Paris. To-day I am absolutely indifferent to everything that is external, as well as to all those who move under the guidance of a single thought. I have no other object in life than to leave it, I do not intend to do anything to anticipate or hasten the end, but I shall lie down to die without regret, on the day when the summons comes.

"Such, monsieur, in all frankness, are the main events of my life prior to my coming here. I have concealed none of my faults, they have been great, they are similar to those committed by some other men. I have suffered much, I suffer every day; but I have looked upon my sufferings as the essential condition of a happy future. Nevertheless, in spite of my resignation, there are some pangs against which I am helpless. To-day I almost gave way to secret agony, in your presence, unknown to you—"

Genestas leaped from his chair.

"Yes, Captain Bluteau, you were present. Did you not point to Mère Colas's bed when we laid Jacques down? Ah! well, if it is impossible for me to look at a child without thinking of the angel I have lost, judge of my suffering in putting to bed a child who is doomed to die! I cannot look coldly upon a child—"

Genestas turned pale.

"Yes, the pretty fair heads, the innocent faces of the children I meet, always speak to me of my misfortunes and renew my torments. Indeed, it is a terrible thing to me to think that so many people thank me for the little good I do here, when that good is the fruit of my remorse. You alone know, captain, the secret of my life. If I had drawn my courage from a purer sentiment than the consciousness of my faults, I should be very happy! but in that case I should have had nothing to tell you of myself."

V

ELEGIES

His narrative ended, Benassis observed on the soldier's face a profoundly thoughtful expression that impressed him. Touched to find that he had been so thoroughly understood, he was sorry that he had caused his guest discomfort, and he said to him:

"But, Captain Bluteau, my misfortunes—"

"Do not call me Captain Bluteau!" cried Genestas, interrupting him and rising abruptly with an impulsive movement that seemed to indicate some dissatisfaction with himself. "There is no Captain Bluteau—I am a blackguard!"

Benassis stared at Genestas in intense amazement as he strode back and forth, like a bee trying to find an outlet from the room he has entered by mistake.

"But who are you, then, monsieur?" demanded Benassis.

"Ah! that's just it!" replied the soldier, returning and standing in front of the physician, whom he dared not look in the face. "I have deceived you!" he continued, in an altered voice. "For the first time in my life I have lied, and I am well punished for it,

for I cannot now tell you the purpose either of my visit or of my infernal spying. Since I have, so to speak, caught a glimpse of your soul, I should have preferred to receive a blow rather than hear you call me Bluteau! You may forgive me for the imposture, but I can never forgive myself, Pierre-Joseph Genestas, who would not lie before a council of war to save my life!"

"You are Commandant Genestas?" cried Benassis, rising.

He took the officer's hand, pressed it very cordially, and said:

"Monsieur, as you said just now, we were friends without knowing each other. I have had a very earnest desire to see you after hearing Monsieur Gravier talk about you: 'A man out of Plutarch!' he said to me of you."

"I am not of Plutarch's kind," replied Genestas, "I am unworthy of you and I could beat myself. I should have confessed my secret to you frankly. But no! I did well to assume a mask and to come here in person in quest of information concerning you. I know now that I must hold my peace. If I had acted openly, I should have caused you pain. God forbid that I should ever bring the slightest sorrow upon you!"

"But I don't understand you, commandant."

"Let us change the subject. I am not ill, I have had a good day, and I shall go away to morrow. When you come to Grenoble, you will find one friend more there, and not a friend to be laughed at.

Pierre-Joseph Genestas's purse, his sword, his blood, his all, are at your service. After all, you have planted your words in good ground. When I am retired, I will find some hole to go to, I will be the mayor there and try to imitate you. If I lack your knowledge, I will study."

"You are right, monsieur; the landowner who employs his time in correcting a simple lack of judgment in the treatment of land in a commune does his country as much good as the best physician can do: one soothes the pain of a few men, the other heals the wounds of his country. But you arouse my curiosity strangely. Can I be of service to you in any way?"

"Of service?" said the commandant, in a trembling voice. "My God! dear Monsieur Benassis, the service that I came here to ask you to render me has become almost impossible. Look you, I have killed many Christians in my life, but one may kill people and still have a kind heart; and so, rough as I may appear, I am able none the less to understand certain things."

"Pray, speak!"

"No, I do not choose to pain you knowingly."

"Oh! commandant, I can endure much suffering."

"Monsieur," said the soldier, trembling, "the life of a child is involved."

Benassis's forehead suddenly contracted, but he made a gesture to beg Genestas to continue.

"A child," resumed the commandant, "who may yet be saved by constant, painstaking care. Where

was I to find a doctor capable of devoting himself to such a patient? Surely not in a city. I had heard of you as an excellent man, but I was afraid of being deceived by an undeserved reputation. So, before entrusting my little one to this Monsieur Benassis of whom such fine things were told me, I determined to study him myself. Now—"

"Enough," said the doctor. "So this child is your own?"

"No, my dear Monsieur Benassis, no. In order to explain this mystery, I must tell you a story in which I do not play the most enviable part; but you have confided your secrets to me, so I may tell you mine."

"One moment, commandant," said the doctor, summoning Jacquotte, who came at once and whom he asked to bring his tea. "You see, commandant, at night, when everyone else is asleep, I cannot sleep!—My sorrows bear heavily on me then, and I try to forget them by drinking tea. That beverage produces a sort of nervous intoxication, a sleep without which I could not live. Do you still decline to take some?"

"For my part," said Genestas, "I prefer your Hermitage wine."

"Very good.—Jacquotte, bring some wine and biscuits," said Benassis to the servant.—"We will take our little nightcap," he added, addressing his guest.

"This tea must do you a great deal of harm!" said Genestas.

"It causes horrible attacks of gout, but I could never give up the habit, it is too soothing, it gives me a moment every evening when life ceases to be a burden.—Go on, I am listening; perhaps your story will deaden the too vivid impression of the memories I have evoked."

"My dear monsieur," said Genestas, putting his empty glass on the mantel, "after the retreat from Moscow, my regiment refitted in a small town in Poland. We purchased horses there at their weight in gold, and we stayed in garrison there until the Emperor's return. So far, so good. I must tell you that I had a friend at that time. During the retreat I was saved more than once by the efforts of a quartermaster named Renard, who did things for me of the sort that should make two men brothers, subject to the exigencies of discipline. We were quartered in the same house, one of the rats' nests built of wood, in which a whole family lived, although you would have said it was not big enough to put a horse in."

"That hovel belonged to certain Jews who carried on their thirty-six trades there, and the old Jew father, whose fingers were never frozen too stiff to handle gold, made a very good thing during our disasters. Those people live in filth and die in gold. Their house was built over cellars, all of wood, of course, in which they had stowed their children, notably a daughter as lovely as a Jewess can be when she keeps herself clean and is not a blonde. She was seventeen years old, as white as snow, with

velvety eyes, lashes as black as rat-tails, thick, glossy hair that made one long to handle it; a truly perfect creature! I was the first to discover those singular arrangements, monsieur, one evening when I was supposed to be in bed, but was strolling tranquilly up and down the street, smoking my pipe. The children were swarming there in a heap like a litter of puppies. It was an amusing sight. The father and mother were taking supper with them. By looking hard through the clouds of pipe-smoke emitted by the father, I discovered the young Jewess, like a bright new napoléon in a heap of copper sous. I have never had time to reflect upon love, my dear Benassis; but when I saw that girl, I realized that hitherto I had simply yielded to the impulses of nature; but now everything was involved, head, heart, and all the rest. I fell in love from head to foot; oh! it was a serious case. I stood there smoking my pipe, intently watching the Jewess until she had blown out her candle and gone to bed. I couldn't close my eyes! I passed the whole night loading my pipe, smoking it, and walking up and down the street. I had never been like that. It was the only time in my life that I ever thought of marriage. When morning came, I saddled my horse and had a two hours' trot in the country to cool my brain; and I almost foundered my horse, without noticing it."

Genestas paused, glanced uneasily at his new friend, and said:

"Excuse me, Benassis, I am not an orator, I

speak as the words come into my mind; if I were in a salon, I should be embarrassed, but with you, and here in the country—"

"Go on," said the doctor.

"When I returned to my room, I found Renard there very busily engaged. Believing that I had been killed in a duel, he was cleaning his pistols and intended to pick a quarrel with the man who had put my light out.—Ah! there was the true pilgrim's character. I confided my passion to Renard, and showed him the children's kennel. As my Renard understood the dialect of those heathens, I asked him to help me to make my advances to the father and mother, and to try and establish a correspondence with Judith. Her name was Judith. In a word, monsieur, for a fortnight I was the happiest of men, because the Jew and his wife allowed us to sup with Judith every night. You know all about such things, I will not annoy you with details; but, if you are not acquainted with tobacco, you don't appreciate an honest man's pleasure as he tranquilly smokes his pipe with his friend Renard and the girl's father, with his princess in presence. It was very pleasant. But I should tell you that Renard was a Parisian, and of a respectable family. His father, who did a large business in the grocery line, had educated him to be a notary, and he knew something; but, having been caught by the conscription, he had to bid adieu to the desk. Indeed, he was built to wear a uniform, had a figure as slender as a girl's, and was perfectly familiar with the art of cajoling people. It was he

whom Judith loved, and she cared as much for me as a horse cares for roast chicken. While I went into ecstasies and took journeys to the moon as I gazed at Judith, my Renard, who came rightly by his name, you see! did his work underground; the traitor and the girl plotted together, and to such good purpose that they were married according to the fashion of the country, because the necessary authorizations would have taken too long to arrive. But he promised to marry her according to French law, if the marriage should ever happen to be attacked. The fact is that in France Madame Renard became Mademoiselle Judith once more. If I had known about it, I would have killed Renard, out of hand, without giving him time to whistle; but the father, mother and daughter, and my quartermaster all understood one another as perfectly as pickpockets at a fair. While I was smoking my pipe and adoring Judith like the Blessed Sacrament, my Renard was making appointments with her, and managing his own interests very handily.

"You are the only person on earth to whom I have ever mentioned the story, which I call infamous; I have always wondered why a man who would die of shame if he should steal a piece of gold will steal his friend's wife, his happiness, his life, without scruple. However, my rascals were married and happy, while I still sat there every evening at supper, admiring Judith like an idiot, and answering like a *tenor* the advances she made to close my eyes. You can imagine that they paid

extremely dear for their rascality. On my word as a man of honor! God pays more attention to the affairs of this world than we imagine.

"Suddenly the Russians are upon us. The campaign of 1813 begins. We are invaded. One fine morning the order comes for us to be on the battle-field of Lutzen at a stated hour. The Emperor knew what he was about when he ordered us to start at once. The Russians had turned our flank. One colonel made a mess of it going to say adieu to a Polish girl who lived some distance from the town, and the vanguard of Cossacks just caught him and his escort. We had only time to mount and form outside the town, to skirmish with the cavalry, and drive back my Russians so that we could slip away during the night. We charged them for three hours and did some really good work. While we were fighting, the ammunition-train and baggage started away from the town. We had a battery of artillery and large supplies of powder of which the Emperor was greatly in need, and they must be taken to him at any price. Our stout defence deceived the Russians, who believed that we were sustained by a whole army corps. But they soon learned their mistake through spies, and found out that they had only one regiment of cavalry and our infantry magazines to deal with. Thereupon, monsieur, toward evening, they made an attack calculated to carry everything before them, so hot that several of us remained on the field. We were surrounded. I was in the front rank with Renard, and

I saw him fighting and charging like a demon, for he thought of his wife. Thanks to him, we were able to make our way back to the town, which our sick had put in a state of defence; but it was a pitiful sight! He and I entered the town last; we found our path blocked by a mob of Cossacks, and we rode at them. One of the savages was going to run me through with his lance, Renard saw him and spurred his horse between us to turn aside the blow; his poor horse, a fine beast, on my word! received the steel and fell, dragging Renard and the Cossack to the ground. I killed the Cossack, seized Renard by the arm and laid him crosswise in front of me, like a bag of grain.

"'Adieu, captain, it's all over!' said Renard.

"'No, no,' I replied, 'we will see.'

"I was in the town then, I dismounted and set him down on some straw against a house. His skull was crushed and his brains oozing out into his hair, and yet he talked!—Oh! he was a fine fellow.

"'We are quits,' he said, 'I give you my life, and I have taken Judith away from you. Take care of her and her child, if she has one. Yes, marry her.'

"Monsieur, obeying my first impulse, I left him lying there like a dog; but, when my rage had passed, I went back. He was dead. The Cossacks had set the town on fire; just then I remembered Judith; I went to look for her, took her up behind me, and, thanks to the speed of my horse, overtook the regiment, which had effected its retreat. As for

the Jew and his family, that was the last of them! they all disappeared like rats. Judith was alone waiting for Renard; I told her nothing at first, you understand. Monsieur, I had to look after that woman during all the disasters of the campaign of 1813, to find lodgings for her, to make her comfortable, in a word, to take care of her, and I believe that she hardly realized the position we were in. I intended to keep her always ten leagues away from us, toward France; she gave birth to a boy while we were fighting at Hanau. I was wounded in that affair, I joined Judith at Strasbourg, then returned to Paris, for I was unlucky enough to be in bed during the campaign in France. But for that wretched luck, I should have gone into the grenadiers of the guard, the Emperor would have promoted me. However, monsieur, I was obliged to support a woman and child who didn't belong to me, and I had three broken ribs! My pay, you understand, wasn't all France. Old Renard, a toothless old rascal, would have none of his daughter-in-law; the Jew father had failed. Judith was dying of grief. One morning she cried while she was dressing my wound.

"'Judith,' I said, 'your child is lost—'

"'And so am I!' said she.

"'Nonsense!' I replied, 'we'll just send for the necessary papers, I'll marry you and acknowledge as mine the child of—'

"I couldn't finish.—Ah! my dear monsieur, a man could do anything to earn the dying woman's glance with which Judith thanked me; I found that

I loved her still, and from that day her little one made his way into my heart. While the papers and the Jew father and mother were on the way, the poor woman's death came nearer and nearer. The day before she died she had strength enough to dress, to adorn herself, to go through all the formal ceremonies and sign the pile of papers; then, when her child had a father and a name, she went back to bed, I kissed her hands and her forehead, and she died. That was my wedding! Two days later, after I had bought the few feet of earth where the poor girl was buried, I found myself the father of a motherless boy whom I put out to nurse during the campaign of 1815. Since then I have taken care of the little rascal as if he were really my own, and no one has ever known my story, which was not a pleasant one to tell. His grandfather has gone to the devil, he is ruined, and travels back and forth with his family between Persia and Russia. There's a chance that he may make a fortune, for he seems to know all about precious stones. I sent the child to school; but latterly I have driven him so in his mathematics to get him into the Polytechnic and have him graduate with good results, that the poor little fellow has fallen sick. His lungs are weak. The doctors in Paris say that there's still a chance for him if he could run about in the mountain air and be properly looked after every minute by a man who is interested in him. So I thought of you, and I came here to reconnoitre and find out something about your ideas and your mode of life. After

what you have told me, I couldn't think of inflicting that distress on you, although we are good friends already."

"Commandant," said Benassis, after a moment's silence, "bring Judith's child to me. It is God's will, I doubt not, that I shall be subjected to this last trial, and I will accept it. I will offer my suffering to God, whose Son died on the cross. Moreover, my emotions during your narrative were pleasurable; is not that a good omen?"

Genestas warmly grasped both of Benassis's hands in his, unable to restrain the tears that glistened in his eyes and rolled down his sunburned cheeks.

"Let us keep all this secret," he said.

"Yes, commandant.—You have had nothing to drink?"

"I am not thirsty," replied Genestas. "I am as stupid as a fool."

"Well, when will you bring him to me?"

"Why, to-morrow if you wish. He has been at Grenoble two days."

"Very good! Start to-morrow morning and come back; I will await you at La Fosseuse's, where we will all four breakfast together."

"Agreed," said Genestas.

The two friends went to bed mutually wishing each other a good-night. When they reached the landing that separated their rooms, Genestas set his light on the window-sill and went up to Benassis.

"*Tonnerre de Dieu!*" he exclaimed, with ingenuous

warmth, "I will not leave you this night without telling you that you are the third Christian who has made me feel that there is something up yonder!"

And he pointed to the sky.

The doctor replied with a sad smile, and pressed very affectionately the hand that Genestas offered him.

The next morning, before daybreak, Commandant Genestas started for the city, and about midday he found himself on the high-road from Grenoble to the village, near the path that led to La Fosseuse's. He was in one of those light, open, four-wheeled wagons, drawn by a single horse, which are met with in all mountainous districts. His companion was a thin, pale young man, who seemed to be no more than twelve years old, although he was entering his sixteenth year. Before alighting, the officer looked about in all directions, hoping to see a peasant who would undertake to drive the wagon to Benassis's house, for the path was too narrow to allow them to drive to La Fosseuse's. The forest-keeper happened to come out on the road and relieved Genestas from his perplexity, so that he and his adopted son could walk to the place of meeting through the mountain paths.

"Won't you be happy, Adrien, running about in this lovely country for a year, learning to hunt and ride, instead of turning pale over your books? Just look!"

Adrien looked at the valley with the listless glance

of a sickly child; but, indifferent as all young people are to the beauties of nature, he said simply, without stopping:

"You are very good, father."

Genestas's heart was touched by that unhealthy listlessness, and he did not speak again to his son before they reached La Fosseuse's house.

"You are prompt, commandant," cried Benassis, rising from the wooden bench on which he was seated.

But he resumed his seat at once, and remained there, lost in thought, looking at Adrien; he studied slowly the tired, sallow face, not without a thrill of admiration for the fine oval outlines which predominated in that noble physiognomy. The child, the living image of his mother, inherited from her an olive skin and beautiful black eyes, intelligent and sad. All the characteristics of the beauty of a Polish Jewess were found in that head with its abundant hair, too strong for the frail body to which it belonged.

"Do you sleep well, my little man?" Benassis asked him.

"Yes, monsieur."

"Show me your knees, turn up your trousers."

Adrien blushed as he unfastened his garters and bared his knee, which the doctor felt with great care.

"Good. Speak, shout, shout loud!"

Adrien shouted.

"Enough! Give me your hands."

The young man held out two soft, white hands, with blue veins like a woman's.

"In what school were you in Paris?"

"Saint-Louis."

"Didn't your principal read his breviary during the night?"

"Yes, monsieur."

"Then you didn't go to sleep at once?"

As Adrien did not reply, Genestas said to the doctor:

"The principal is an estimable priest; he advised me to take my little trooper away on account of his health."

"Well," rejoined Benassis, plunging a searching glance into Adrien's trembling eyes, "there is still a way out. Yes, we will make a man of this child.—We will live together like two chums, my boy! We will go to bed early and get up early.—I will teach your son to ride, commandant. After a month or two devoted to remaking his stomach by a milk diet, I will obtain him a permit to carry weapons and to hunt, and I will put him in charge of Butifer; they will hunt chamois together. Give your son four or five months of country life, and you won't know him, commandant. Butifer will think himself very lucky! I know the pilgrim; he'll take you into Switzerland, my young friend, through the Alps, drag you up on top of the mountains and make you six inches taller in six months; he'll bring the color to your cheeks, strengthen your nerves, and help you to forget your wretched school habits. Then you can

go back and resume your studies and you will become a man. Butifer is an honest fellow, we can trust him with the necessary money to meet the expenses of travel and your hunting; the responsibility will keep him straight for six months and it will be so much gained for him."

Genestas's face seemed to grow brighter and brighter at each word the doctor spoke.

"Let us have some breakfast. La Fosseuse is impatient to see you," said Benassis, patting Adrien's cheek.

"He's not consumptive, then?" Genestas asked the doctor, taking his arm and leading him aside.

"No more than you or I."

"What is the matter with him?"

"Pshaw!" answered Benassis, "he's passing through a momentary trouble, that's all."

La Fosseuse appeared in the doorway, and Genestas was surprised at her simple yet dainty costume. She was no longer the peasant woman of the night before, but a refined and graceful Parisian, whose glances he found it difficult to meet. The soldier turned his eyes upon a walnut table, without a cloth, so well polished that it seemed to be varnished, on which were eggs, butter, a pie, and mountain strawberries that filled the air with perfume. The poor girl had placed flowers all about, showing that the day was a holiday to her. At the sight, the commandant could not help coveting the simple house and the green lawn; he glanced at the peasant with an expression indicating hope and doubt at once;

then he turned his eyes upon Adrien, to whom La Fosseuse was handing the eggs, busily attending to his wants to keep herself in countenance.

"Commandant," said Benassis, "you know at what price you receive hospitality here. You must tell my Fosseuse some military story."

"We must let monsieur eat his breakfast in peace first; but, after he has had his coffee—"

"Of course, I shall be very glad," rejoined the commandant, "but I will tell my story only on one condition: that you tell us some anecdote of your former life."

"But, monsieur," she replied, blushing, "nothing ever happened to me that is worth the trouble of telling.—Will you have a little of this rice pâté, my boy?" she said, seeing that Adrien's plate was empty.

"Yes, mademoiselle."

"It is delicious," said Genestas.

"What will you say to her coffee, then?" cried Benassis.

"I should much prefer to listen to our charming hostess."

"You go about it in the wrong way, Genestas," said Benassis.—"Listen, my child," he continued, addressing La Fosseuse and pressing her hand, "this officer whom you see by your side conceals an excellent heart beneath a harsh exterior, and you can speak here with perfect confidence. Speak, or be silent, we do not propose to tease you. Poor child, if you can ever be understood and appreciated,

BREAKFAST WITH LA FOSSEUSE

"Here comes Mariette with the coffee," she replied. "When you are all served, I will tell you of my loves.—But monsieur le commandant will not forget his promise?" she added, with a glance, at once modest and aggressive, at Genestas.

"I am incapable of it, mademoiselle," replied Genestas, respectfully.

Daniel Hernandez

BREAKFAST WITH LA FOSSEUSE

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"I am incapable of it, mademoiselle," replied Genestas, respectfully.

you can be by the three persons with whom you now are. Tell us of your past loves, that will not be trenching on the present secrets of your heart."

"Here comes Mariette with the coffee," she replied. "When you are all served, I will tell you of my loves.—But monsieur le commandant will not forget his promise?" she added, with a glance, at once modest and aggressive, at Genestas.

"I am incapable of it, mademoiselle," replied Genestas, respectfully.

"At the age of sixteen," said La Fosseuse, "although I was sickly, I was compelled to beg my bread by the roadside in Savoie. I slept at Les Echelles in a great manger filled with straw. The innkeeper who gave me that place to sleep in was a good man, but his wife couldn't endure me and was always insulting me. It hurt me a good deal, for I wasn't a bad girl, although I was poor; I prayed every morning and night, I didn't steal, I went about as God ordered me, asking for enough to live on, because I didn't know how to do anything and was really sick, utterly unable to lift a hoe or wind cotton. Well, I was turned away from the inn on account of a dog. I was without friends or relations, and I had never, since I was born, met a glance that did me good. Good mother Morin, who brought me up, was dead: she was very kind to me, but I can hardly remember any caresses from her; besides, the poor old woman worked in the fields like a man; and, if she did cosset me, she also hit

me over the fingers with a spoon when I was in too much of a hurry to eat our soup out of the bowl. Poor old woman, not a day passes that I don't mention her in my prayers! God grant that she has a happier life up yonder than she had on earth, especially a better bed; she was always complaining of the wretched pallet on which we both slept. You can't imagine, my dear messieurs, how it hurts you to receive nothing but insults, rebuffs, and looks that pierce your heart as if a knife had been driven into it. I have known poor old creatures who cared nothing at all for it; but I wasn't born for that trade. A *no* always made me cry. Every night I returned home sadder than ever, and I never got any consolation until I had said my prayers. In fact, in all God's creation, there wasn't a single heart against which I could rest mine! I had only the blue sky for a friend. I was always happy when the sky was all blue. When the wind had swept away the clouds, I would lie down in some nook among the rocks and look at the sky. Then I would dream that I was a great lady. By looking and looking, I would imagine that I was bathed in that blue expanse; I would imagine that I was living up there, I would cease to feel anything weighing me down, but would go up and up and become happy and free.—To return to my loves,—I must tell you that the innkeeper's dog had a little black puppy, pretty as a baby, all white, with black spots on its paws; I can still see the little cherub! The poor little thing was the only creature that ever gave me a friendly glance in those days; I

kept my best bits of food for him, he knew me, used to come and meet me at night, wasn't ashamed of my poverty, but used to jump upon me and lick my feet; indeed, there was something so loving and grateful in his eyes that I often wept when I looked at him.

"'And yet he's the only creature that really cares for me!' I would say.

"In winter he slept at my feet. It hurt me so to see him beaten that I had broken him of going into houses to steal bones, and he was satisfied with my bread. If I was sad, he would plant himself in front of me and look into my eyes, as much as to say:

"'Are you very unhappy, my poor Fosseuse?'

"When people tossed sous to me, he would pick them out of the dust and bring them to me, the dear brute. While I had that friend, I was less unhappy. I put by a few sous every day to try and raise fifty francs to buy him of Père Manseau. One day his wife, seeing that the dog was fond of me, took it into her head to fall in love with him. Mind you, the dog couldn't endure her. Those creatures have a keen scent for hearts! they can tell at once when anyone really likes them. I had a twenty-franc gold piece sewn in the binding of my skirt; so I said to Monsieur Manseau:

"'My dear monsieur, I meant to offer you my year's savings for your dog; but sell him to me for twenty francs before your wife says she wants him for herself, although she doesn't really care for him; see, here's the money.'

"'No, no, my love,' he said, 'put away your twenty francs. Heaven forbid that I should take a poor girl's money! Keep the dog. If my wife raises an outcry, go away.'

"His wife made him a scene about the dog. Great God! you'd have supposed the house was on fire! And you could never guess what she thought of doing? When she found that the dog had been given to me from friendship, that she couldn't have him, she had him poisoned. My poor puppy died in my arms. I wept as if he were my own child, and buried him under a fir-tree. You don't know all that I put in that grave! I said to myself, as I sat there, that I was always to be alone in the world, that nothing would succeed with me, that I was going back where I was before, without anybody in the world to care for me, and that I should never again see a friendly expression in any eye. I stayed there all one night, in the open air, praying God to have pity on me. When I went back to the road, I saw a little poor boy ten years old without any hands.

"'The good Lord has granted my prayer,' I thought.—I had never prayed to Him as I did that night.—'I will take care of this poor little fellow, we will beg together, and I will be his mother; two of us together ought to succeed better; I shall have more courage for him than I have for myself!'

"At first the little fellow seemed contented; he would have been very fastidious not to be, for I did whatever he wanted, I gave him the best I had; in

short, I was his slave, and he tyrannized over me; but still I liked it better than being alone. But as soon as the little toper found out that I had twenty francs sewn in my dress, he ripped the seam and stole my gold piece, the price of my poor dog! I meant to pay for masses with it. A child without hands! it makes one shudder. That theft disgusted me with life. It seemed that I could love nothing that it didn't die in my hands! One day I saw a pretty French calèche coming up the hill of Les Echelles. There was a young lady inside as lovely as the Virgin Mary, and a young man who looked like her.

"'See what a pretty girl!' the young man said to her, as he tossed me a piece of money.

"Only you, Monsieur Benassis, can understand the joy that compliment, the only one I ever heard, caused me; but the gentleman ought not to have thrown me money. Instantly, impelled by a thousand I don't know what that tormented my brain, I began to run through paths that made a short cut to the cliffs of Les Echelles, and I got there ahead of the calèche, which came up the hill very slowly. So I was able to see the young man again; he was greatly surprised to see me, and I was so happy that my heart beat in my throat; a sort of instinct drew me to him. When he recognized me, I kept on my way, suspecting that he and the young lady would stop to see the cascade of Couz; when they came down, they saw me once more under the walnut-trees by the roadside; thereupon they questioned me, seeming to be interested in me. Never

in my life have I heard sweeter voices than those of that handsome young man and his sister, for she surely was his sister; I thought of them for a year, hoping always that they would come again. I would have given two years of my life just to see that traveller once more, he seemed such a sweet man! Those are the important events of my life, down to the day I first knew Monsieur Benassis; for, when my mistress discharged me for putting on her miserable ball-dress, I pitied her and forgave her; and, on the word of an honest girl, if you will allow me to speak frankly, I thought that I was a better woman than she, although she was a countess."

"Well," said Genestas, after a moment's silence, "you see that God has taken a liking to you; you are like a fish in water here."

At those words La Fosseuse looked at Benassis with eyes overflowing with gratitude.

"I would like to be rich!" said the officer.

That exclamation was followed by a profound silence.

"You owe me a story," said La Fosseuse, at last, in her coaxing voice.

"I will tell you one," said Genestas.—"The day before the battle of Friedland," he continued, after a pause, "I had been sent with a message to General Davoust's quarters, and was returning to my camp when, at a bend in the road, I found myself face to face with the Emperor. Napoléon looked at me:

"'You are Captain Genestas?' he said.

"'Yes, Sire.'

"'You have been in Egypt?'

"'Yes, Sire.'

"'Don't go any farther on this road,' he said, 'turn to the left, you will reach your division sooner.'

"You cannot imagine the kindly tone in which the Emperor said those words, although he had so many things on his mind, for he was riding over the country to become acquainted with his battlefield. I tell you this so that you may see what a memory he had and that I was one of those whose faces were known to him. In 1815 I took the oath. Except for that false step, I might, perhaps, be a colonel to-day; but I never intended to betray the Bourbons; in those days I saw nothing more than that France must be defended. I found myself a major in the grenadiers of the Garde Impériale, and, in spite of the pain I still felt from my wound, I did my share in the mêlée at the battle of Waterloo. When it was all over, I went with Napoléon to Paris; then, when he started for Rochefort, I followed him notwithstanding his orders; I was very glad of an opportunity to see that nothing happened to him on the road. And so, when he went out to walk on the shore, he found me on guard within ten paces of him.

"'Well, Genestas,' he said, walking up to me, 'so we're not dead?'

"Those words broke my heart. If you had heard

him, you would have shuddered as I did, from head to foot. He pointed to the villainous English war-ship that was blockading the harbor, and said:

"'When I look at that, I regret that I did not drown myself in the blood of my guard.'

"Yes," added Genestas, looking at the doctor and La Fosseuse, "those were his very words.

"'The marshals who prevented you from charging in person,' I said to him, 'and who put you in your carriage, were no friends of yours.'

"'Come with me!' he cried, eagerly, 'the game is not ended.'

"'Sire, I will gladly come and join you; but just at present I have a motherless child on my hands and I am not free.'

"Adrien here prevented me from going to Saint Helena.

"'Stay,' he said, 'I have never given you anything, you were not one of those who always had one hand full and the other open; here is the snuff-box I used during the last campaign. Remain in France, we need gallant fellows here, after all! Stay in the service, remember me. You are the last man of my Egyptian army whom I shall have seen alive in France.'

"He gave me a little snuff-box.

"'Have the words *Honor and Fatherland* engraved on it,' he said; 'they tell the story of our last two campaigns.'

"Then the members of his suite joined him, and I remained with them all the morning. The Emperor

went hither and thither along the shore. He was still calm, but knitted his brow occasionally. At noon his embarkation was deemed to be altogether impossible. The English knew that he was at Rochefort, he must either put himself in their hands or pass through France again. We were all restless! The minutes were like hours. Napoléon was between the Bourbons, who would have shot him, and the English, who are not an honorable nation, for they can never purge themselves of the shame with which they covered themselves when they cast on a lonely rock an enemy who sought hospitality at their hands. During that anxious time some one in his suite, I don't know who, introduced one Lieutenant Doret, a sailor who came to suggest to him a method of crossing to America. There was a brig of war in the harbor at the time, and a merchant vessel.

"'Captain,' said the Emperor, 'what is your plan?'

"'Sire,' was the reply, 'you will be on the merchant vessel, I will man the brig with devoted men under the white flag, we will board the Englishman, we will set him on fire and blow him up, then you can pass.'

"'We will go with you!' I cried to the captain.

"Napoléon looked at us all and said:

"'Captain Doret, remain in France.'

"That was the only time I ever saw Napoléon moved. He waved his hand to us and returned to the house. I left when I saw him get aboard the

English ship. He was lost, and he knew it. There was a traitor in the harbor who notified the enemy of the Emperor's presence there by signals. Thereupon Napoléon tried one last means: he did as he used to do on the battlefield, he went to them instead of waiting for them to come to him. You talk about grief, why, words cannot describe the despair of those who loved him for himself."

"Where is his snuff-box?" asked La Fosseuse.

"It is at Grenoble, in a box," replied the commandant.

"I will go and look at it if you will allow me. To think that you have something he once held in his fingers! Had he a handsome hand?"

"Very."

"Is it true that he is dead? Come, tell me the truth."

"Yes, certainly he is dead, my poor child."

"I was so young in 1815 that I never could see anything but his hat, but I came near being crushed to death at Grenoble."

"This is extremely good coffee," said Genestas.—"Well, Adrien, do you like this region? Will you come and see mademoiselle?"

The boy did not reply; he seemed to be afraid to look at La Fosseuse. Benassis hardly removed his eyes from the child, whose very soul he seemed to be reading.

"Certainly he will come and see her," he said. "But let us go to the house; I must get one of my horses, as I have a long ride to take. While I am

away, you can be getting acquainted with Jacquotte."

"Pray come with us," said Genestas to La Fosseuse.

"Willingly," she replied, "I have several things to take back to Madame Jacquotte."

They started for the doctor's house, and La Fosseuse, whom their company made very cheerful, led them by narrow paths through the wildest parts of the mountain.

"Monsieur l'officier," she said, after a brief silence, "you have told me nothing about yourself, and I should have liked to hear you tell some war story. I like what you said of Napoléon, but it makes me feel bad. If you were very obliging—"

"She is right," said Benassis, gently, "you ought to tell us some interesting story as we walk. Come, give us something like the story of your beam, at the Bérésina."

"I have very few reminiscences," said Genestas. "You sometimes meet people to whom all sorts of things happen, but I have never been the hero of any adventure. This is the only amusing thing that ever happened to me. In 1805 I was only a sub-lieutenant, I belonged to the *Grande Armée* and I found myself at Austerlitz. Before taking Ulm, we had to fight several skirmishes in which the cavalry distinguished itself greatly. I was then in Murat's command, who rarely declined to play trumps. After one of the first affairs of the campaign, we took possession of a district in which there were

several fine estates. At night my regiment camped in the park belonging to a splendid château occupied by a young and pretty woman, a countess; I naturally proposed to take up my quarters under her roof, and I hurried thither to prevent anything like pillage. I reached the salon just as my quartermaster was taking aim at the countess and brutally demanding from her what such a woman certainly could not give him, he was too ugly! I struck up his carbine with my sword, the bullet shattered a mirror; then I gave my man a back-handed blow and stretched him on the floor. All the countess's people came running in when they heard her shrieks and the report, and they began to threaten me.

"'Stop,' she said to them in German as they were about to run me through, 'that officer saved my life!'

"They retired. The lady gave me her handkerchief, a beautiful embroidered handkerchief which I still have, and told me that I could always find shelter under her roof, and that, if I ever had any sorrow, of whatever nature it might be, she would be a sister and a devoted friend to me; in short, she flattered me in every possible way. That woman was as lovely as a wedding-day, as winning as a kitten. We dined together. The next day I was madly in love; but on the next day after that we had to be in line at Guntzbourg, I believe it was, and I broke camp, armed with my handkerchief.

"The battle began; I said to myself:

"'This way, bullets! Great God, is there not one for me among all that are flying about?'

"But I didn't want one in the thigh, for then I couldn't have returned to the château. I was not disgusted with life, I simply wanted a smart wound in the arm so that I could be cared for and coddled by the princess. I rushed at the enemy like a maniac. But I had no luck, I came out safe and sound. No more countess for me, I had to march.—There—"

They had reached the doctor's house, and he at once mounted and rode away. When the doctor returned, the cook, to whom Genestas had commended his son, had already taken possession of Adrien, and had installed him in Monsieur Gravier's famous apartment. She was vastly surprised when her master ordered a simple cot-bed to be prepared for the young man in his own room, and gave the order in such a peremptory tone that it was impossible for Jacquotte to make the slightest observation. After dinner the commandant started for Grenoble, happy in Benassis's renewed assurances of the child's speedy restoration to health.

Early in December, eight months after he had placed his son in the doctor's charge, Genestas was commissioned lieutenant-colonel in a regiment in garrison at Poitiers. He was thinking of writing to inform Benassis of his departure, when he received a letter from him announcing Adrien's restoration to perfect health.

"The child," he said, "has grown tall and strong, and is wonderfully well. Since you last saw him he has turned

Butifer's lessons to such good advantage, that he's as fine a shot as our smuggler himself; he is quick of movement and active too, a good walker, and a good rider. He has changed in every respect. The boy of sixteen, who used to look as if he were twelve, now seems to be twenty. He has a self-assured, fearless expression. He is a man, and a man concerning whose future you ought now to reflect."

"I will certainly go and see Benassis to-morrow, and I will get his opinion as to the profession I ought to have that youngster adopt," said Genestas to himself, as he went to attend the farewell banquet given him by his officers, for he was to remain at Grenoble only a few days.

When the lieutenant-colonel returned to his quarters, his servant handed him a letter brought by a messenger who had been waiting a long while for the reply. Although considerably dazed by the toasts the officers had drunk to him, Genestas recognized his son's handwriting, supposed that he had written to ask him for the means of gratifying some youthful whim, and left it lying on the table, where he found it the next morning when the fumes of champagne had disappeared.

"MY DEAR FATHER—"

"Ah! you little rascal," he said to himself, "you never fail to wheedle me when you want something!"

With that he looked at the letter again and read these words:

"The good Monsieur Benassis is dead—"

The letter fell from Genestas's hands, and he read no more for a long while.

"The sad event has caused consternation throughout the country, and surprised us all the more because he seemed to be perfectly well the day before, without the slightest indication of any sort of trouble. The day before yesterday, he went to see all his patients, even those who live farthest away, as if he knew that his end was near; he said to everybody he met:

"'Adieu, my friend.'

"He came home, as usual, to dine with me, about five o'clock. Jacquotte thought his face looked a little flushed and purplish; as it was cold, she did not give him a foot-bath, which she always used to make him take when she saw that the blood had gone to his head. So the poor girl has been crying through her tears for two days:

"'If I had given him a foot-bath, he would be alive this minute!'

"Monsieur Benassis was hungry, he ate a good deal and was more lively than usual. We laughed a lot together, and I had never seen him in a laughing mood. After dinner, about seven o'clock, a man came from Saint-Laurent-du-Pont to call him to a very urgent case. He said to me:

"'I must go; but my dinner hasn't digested yet, and I don't like to ride in that condition, especially in cold weather; it's enough to kill a man!'

"However, he started. About nine o'clock, Goguelat, the letter-carrier, brought a letter for Monsieur Benassis. Jacquotte was tired through doing her washing, so she went to bed, giving me the letter and asking me to make the tea over the fire in our room, for I still sleep in my little corded bed beside his. I put out the fire in the salon, and went upstairs to wait for my dear friend. Before I put the letter on the mantel, curiosity led me to glance at the stamp and the handwriting. The letter came from Paris, and it looked to

me as if it were written by a woman. I mention this because of the influence that letter had on the result. About ten o'clock I heard the horse's steps, and Monsieur Benassis saying to Nicolle:

"'It's terribly cold, and I don't feel very well.'

"'Do you want me to wake Jacquotte?' Nicolle asked him.

"'No, no!'

"And he came upstairs.

"'I have made your tea for you,' I said.

"'Thanks, Adrien,' he replied, with the smile you know so well.

"That was his last smile. I saw him take off his cravat as if he were choking.

"'It's very hot here!' he said.

"Then he threw himself into an easy-chair.

"'A letter came for you, my dear friend, here it is,' I said.

"He took the letter, looked at the handwriting, and cried:

"'Ah! my God, perhaps she is free!'

"Then he threw his head back, and his hands shook; at last he put a light on the table and broke the seal of the letter. The tone in which he made the exclamation was so terrifying to me that I watched him while he was reading, and I saw him turn red and weep. Then he suddenly fell head foremost to the floor; I picked him up, and saw that his face was all a dark purple.

"'I am dead!' he stammered, making a violent effort to stand up. 'Bleed, bleed me!' he cried, seizing my hand. 'Adrien, burn this letter!'

"He handed me the letter, and I threw it in the fire. I called Jacquotte and Nicolle, but only Nicolle heard me; he came up and helped me lay Monsieur Benassis on my little cot. My dear friend could no longer understand! He opened his eyes after that, but he saw nothing. Nicolle rode off to call Monsieur Bordier, the surgeon, and spread the alarm through the village. In a moment the whole place was on foot. Monsieur Janvier, Monsieur Dufau, and the others whom you know, were the first to come. Monsieur Benassis was almost dead,

there was nothing to be done. Monsieur Bordier burned the soles of his feet, but could not obtain a sign of life. It was a combination of gout and the rushing of the blood to the brain. I give you all these details faithfully, my dear father, because I know how fond you are of Monsieur Benassis. As for myself, I am very sad and depressed. I can tell you, that, except you, I never loved anyone better. I gained more by talking one evening with dear Monsieur Benassis than by learning all the things taught at school. When his death was known throughout the village the next morning, there was an extraordinary sight. The courtyard and garden were filled with people. They wept and cried aloud! in fact, no one did any work that day; they all told what Monsieur Benassis said the last time he spoke to them; one dilated upon all the good he had done him; those who were least affected spoke for the others; the crowd increased from hour to hour, and everybody wanted to see him.

"The sad news spread rapidly, people all over the canton and even in the adjoining cantons had the same idea, and men, women, boys, and girls thronged to the village from ten leagues around. When the funeral procession had formed, the casket was carried into the church by the four oldest men in the commune, but only with the greatest difficulty, for there were nearly five thousand people between Monsieur Benassis's house and the church, most of them kneeling as at the procession of the Holy Spirit. The church was not large enough to hold everybody. When the service began, there was such a profound silence, notwithstanding the weeping, that you could hear the little bell and the chants at the end of the main street. But when the time came to carry the body to the new cemetery that Monsieur Benassis presented to the village, hardly suspecting, poor man, that he would be the first one buried there, then there was a great outcry. Monsieur Janvier wept as he recited the prayers, and there were tears in everybody's eyes. At last he was buried. By evening the crowd had dispersed and everyone had gone home, sowing mourning and tears throughout the country. The next morning, Gondrin,

Goguelat, Butifer, the forest-keeper, and several others set about raising a pyramid of earth twenty feet high on the spot where Monsieur Benassis lies, which they are sodding and in which everybody is taking a hand.

"Such, my dear father, are the events that have taken place here in three days. Monsieur Benassis's will was found by Monsieur Dufau, lying open on his table. The disposition our dear friend makes of his property has increased, if that is possible, the universal affection for him and the regret caused by his death. Now, my dear father, I expect to receive through Butifer, who will bring you this letter, a reply to guide my conduct. Will you come to get me, or shall I go and join you at Grenoble? Tell me what you want me to do, and be sure of my absolute obedience.

"Adieu, father, I send you a thousand loving wishes.

"Your affectionate son,

"ADRIEN GENESTAS."

"I must go there at once!" cried the soldier.

He ordered his horse saddled, and started on his journey on one of those December mornings when the sky is covered with a veil of gray, when the wind is not strong enough to drive away the mist through which the leafless trees and the damp houses no longer wear their usual aspect. The silence was dull—there are brilliant silences. In fine weather the slightest sound has a touch of cheerfulness; but in gloomy weather nature is not silent, it is dumb. The fog, clinging to the trees, condensed in drops which fell slowly on the leaves, like tears. Every noise died in the dead atmosphere. Colonel Genestas, whose heart was oppressed by thoughts of death and by profound regrets, sympathized with the melancholy mood of nature. He involuntarily

compared the lovely spring sky and the valley in its bright and joyous garb as he had seen it on his first visit, with the now melancholy aspect of a leaden sky, the mountains stripped of their robes of green and not yet clothed in their robes of snow, which produce an effect not lacking in charm. Bare ground is a painful sight to a man who is walking toward a tomb; to him that tomb seems to be everywhere. The black firs that embellished the mountain-tops here and there added fresh images of mourning to all those that made a deep impression on the officer's mind; and so, whenever his glance embraced the whole valley from end to end, he could not divert his thoughts from the misfortune that had befallen the canton, and from the void produced by the death of one man. Genestas soon reached the spot where, on his first visit, he had taken a cup of milk. When he saw the smoke of the cottage where the children from the hospice were brought up, he thought more particularly of Benassis's benevolent spirit, and determined to go in and give the poor woman something in his name. Having fastened his horse to a tree, he opened the door without knocking.

"Good-day, mother," he said to the old woman, whom he found in the chimney-corner with all her children squatting round her; "do you recognize me?"

"Oh! yes, indeed, my dear monsieur. You came here one fine spring day and gave me two crowns."

"Here, mother, this is for you and the children."

"I thank you, kind sir. May Heaven bless you!"

"Do not thank me, you owe this money to poor Père Benassis."

The old woman raised her head and looked at Genestas.

"Ah! monsieur, although he has left all his property to our poor canton, and we are all his heirs, we have lost our greatest treasure, for he made everything come to some good here."

"Adieu, mother; pray for him!" said Genestas, tapping the children lightly with his hunting-crop.

Then, attended by the whole little family and the old woman, he remounted his horse and rode away. As he followed the road through the valley, he noticed the broad path leading to La Fosseuse's house. When he reached the ridge from which he could see the house, he discovered, not without great uneasiness, that the doors and shutters were closed; he returned to the high-road, lined by poplars which had lost all their leaves. As he came out on the road, he saw the old ploughman, almost in his best clothes, walking slowly along, all alone and without his tools.

"Good-morning, Goodman Moreau."

"Ah! good-morning, monsieur—I place you," added the goodman, after a moment's silence. "You are a friend of our late mayor! Ah! monsieur, wouldn't it have been better for the good Lord to take a poor old sciatic like me instead of him? I am of no consequence here, while he was everybody's joy."

"Do you know why there is nobody at La Fosseuse's?"

The goodman looked up at the sky.

"What time is it, monsieur? I can't see the sun."

"Ten o'clock."

"Oh! well, she's at mass or else at the cemetery. She goes there every day; she inherits an annuity of five hundred francs and has her house during her life; but she is half-crazed on account of his death."

"Where are you going, goodman?"

"To the funeral of that poor little Jacques, who was my nephew. The sickly little fellow died yesterday morning. On my word, it seemed as if it was dear Monsieur Benassis that kept him alive. All these youngsters are dying!" added Moreau, in a half-complaining, half-jeering tone.

At the entrance to the village Genestas stopped his horse as he caught sight of Gondrin and Goguelat, both armed with spades and pickaxes.

"Well, my old troopers," he called to them, "so we have had the misfortune to lose him!"

"Enough, enough, captain!" rejoined Goguelat, gruffly; "we know it well enough, we have been digging sods for the tomb."

"Will it not be a noble life to tell about?" said Genestas.

"Yes," replied Goguelat; "except for the fighting, he was the Napoléon of our valley."

On reaching the vicarage, Genestas saw Butifer

and Adrien at the door, talking with Monsieur Janvier, who had evidently just returned from saying mass. Butifer, seeing the officer prepare to dismount, went at once to hold his horse, while Adrien threw his arms about his father's neck. Genestas was deeply moved by that outburst of affection; but he concealed his feelings, and said to him:

"So you are all made over, Adrien! *Tudieu!* thanks to our poor friend, you have grown to be almost a man! I shall not forget Master Butifer, your instructor."

"Oh! colonel," said Butifer, "take me into your regiment! Since monsieur le maire died, I have been afraid of myself. Didn't he want me to be a soldier? Very well, I'll do as he wanted me to. He told you who I was, you will be indulgent to me—"

"Agreed, my fine fellow," said Genestas, grasping his hand. "Never fear, I will find some good place for you.—Well, monsieur le curé?"

"Monsieur le colonel, I am as deeply grieved as all the people in the canton, but I feel more keenly than they the irreparable loss we have sustained. That man was an angel! Luckily, he died without suffering. God released with a kindly hand the bonds of a life that was a constant benefaction to us."

"May I, without presumption, ask you to go with me to the cemetery? I should like to bid a sort of adieu to him."

Butifer and Adrien followed Genestas and the curé, who walked a few steps in advance, talking together. When they had passed through the village, and were approaching the little lake, the lieutenant-colonel spied, on the side of the mountain, a large rocky tract of land, surrounded by walls.

"That is the cemetery," said the curé. "Three months before he was brought here he first called attention to the disadvantages resulting from the proximity of cemeteries to churches; and, in order to carry out the law which requires them to be located a certain distance from dwellings, he himself gave this piece of land to the commune. We are to bury a poor little child here to-day: thus we shall have begun by placing innocence and virtue in this spot. Is death a reward, then? Does God teach us a lesson by summoning two spotless creatures to Him? Shall we go to Him when we have been thoroughly tested in youth by physical suffering, and in more advanced age by mental suffering? See, there is the rustic monument we have raised to him."

Genestas saw a pyramid of earth about twenty feet in height, still bare, but with the sods beginning to show around the edges beneath the busy hands of several villagers. La Fosseuse was weeping bitterly, her face hidden in her hands, seated on the stones heaped around the foot of an immense cross made of a fir-tree that had not been stripped of its bark.

The officer read these words carved in great letters in the wood:

"D. O. M.

HERE LIES

GOOD MONSIEUR BENASSIS

OUR FATHER.

PRAY FOR HIM."

"Was it you, monsieur," queried Genestas, "who—?"

"No," replied the curé, "we used the words that have echoed from the summits of these mountains all the way to Grenoble."

After a moment's silence, during which he had drawn near to La Fosseuse, who did not hear him, Genestas said to the curé:

"As soon as I am retired, I will come and end my days among you."

October 1832—July 1833.

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